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BLENDER



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A- Review

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DARLIN' BE HOME SOON ★ LET IT BE *Performed by Claudia Lennear**** ★
FURTHER ON UP THE ROAD *Performed by Don Preston**

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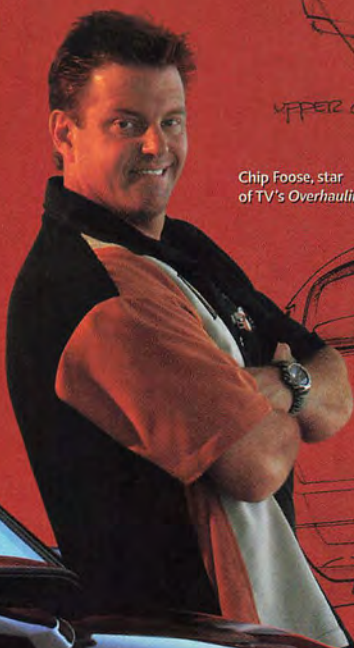
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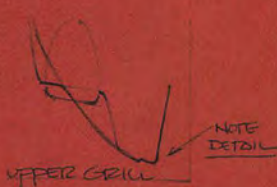
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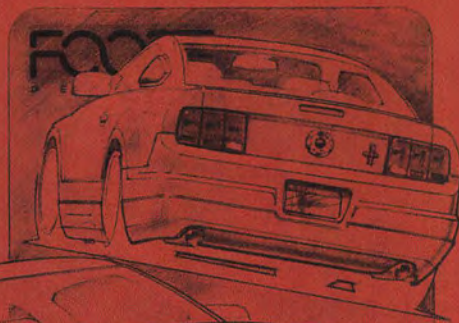
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BLENDER

NOVEMBER 2005

88 NATALIE PORTMAN

She learned "how to flirt" when she was 12. And since then, Natalie Portman has been heating up the big screen as everything from an alien queen to a really, really hot stripper. Now, with the forthcoming *V for Vendetta*, the *Garden State* star is promising to change your life all over again.

99 ON THE SET WITH 50 CENT

Unlike most actors, the cast of *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* are more concerned about the availability of flak jackets than chilled mineral water. Why? Because this retelling of 50 Cent's story stars none other than the much-shot megastar himself.

102 100 GREATEST ROCK MOVIES

From the sublime (*This Is Spinal Tap*) to the ridiculous (*This Is Spinal Tap*), rock & roll has inspired some of cinema's finest moments. So grab a bag of popcorn and/or heroin and read about the 100 best—and the single worst—rock films ever made.

118 I WANT A FAMOUS FACE

On any given night in L.A., at any given nightclub, there are hundreds upon hundreds of girls—beautiful girls—who are willing to suffer any number of indignities to attain that most American of dreams: stardom. Meet one of them ...

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"IN A CELEBRITY-OBSESSED CULTURE, IT'S INTERESTING BEING A CELEBRITY."



ON THE COVER

NATALIE
PORTMAN

PHOTO: MARK ABRAHAMS.
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rappers and established
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music industry wants a
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Isaac Hayes penned this
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Despite their creative
differences, actors and
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one thing in common: an
overwhelming desire to get
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Dear Ketel One Drinker

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"OBNOXIOUS"

"POLICE SWOOP C PUNK DISC SHOP"

"Foul Mouth"

"FILTH & TH"

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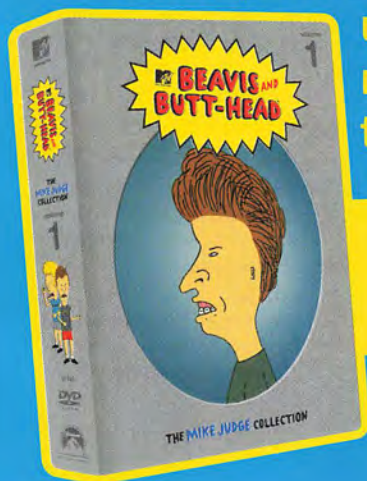
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You've Got Mail

WE WANT YOU TO SHARE...



CHI-LITE OUT

Good for you for recognizing the passing of Eugene Record of Chi-Lites fame with your October spine message ("Whatever you got, just be glad you got it").

NAOMI EALY, BEACON, NY

HEAVY WAITS

I can't believe I got one at last—and I'm not even sure that I'm right—but isn't the back page lyric on the most recent issue ("You'll find your ignorance is blissful every goddamn time") from Tom Waits's "Heartattack and Vine"?

PETE DENNESE, WINDSOR, CA

You're wrong—to have been concerned that you might not be right. See what we did there?

KRUMP LOVE

While I enjoy your continued coverage of Courtney Love's lunatic activities, may I respectfully suggest that her new enthusiasm for getting her "krump" on is actually one of the sanest—and healthiest!—things she's done in some time.

SHANE CHAN, AUBURN, AL

WHEN THE LEVEES BREAK ...

Last spring I spent one of the greatest weekends of my life at Jazzfest in New Orleans enjoying the awesome music, great food and the always generous hospitality of the people who live there. To be honest, I don't know where I'm going with this, except to say that I could not have been sadder about the awful, awful things that have happened there and that the people there should know that we are thinking of them and trying to do what we can to help.

ERROL REISNER, SPRINGFIELD, MA

CONGRATULATIONS TO COLLEEN WEATHERLY OF RALEIGH, NC, WINNER OF BLENDER'S SEPTEMBER CROSSWORD CONTEST, WHO SCORED A DELL AXIM.

LISTEN UP

BLENDER READERS: We want to hear from you. If we print your letter in our next issue, we'll send you the new iRiver T30 flash-based MP3 player.

Send all correspondence to *Blender*, 1040 Sixth Avenue, 22nd floor, New York, NY 10018
Or: your2cents@blender.com.



Broken wrists weren't going to stop Michael from filming his video.

BILLIE GENIUS

Your piece on "Billie Jean" was an appropriate reminder that, before that track, MTV rarely played videos by black artists. As opposed to now, of course, when they rarely play videos at all!

JOSH LUMPKIN, CULVER CITY, CO

HAZZARD AHEAD

Jessica Simpson shouldn't worry about people thinking she was "trying to act" in *The Dukes of Hazzard*. I know I didn't.

JARED CIRELLO, WEBB CITY, OK

AS THE CROW SNORES

Being dumb enough to confuse Sheryl Crow with Heidi Fleiss I can understand (although Ms. Crow is waaay cuter). But complaining about her snoring? That is too dumb to believe.

ALEX MENKES, WEARE, NH

DEAD WRONG

I usually trust *Blender*, but I couldn't believe it when I read that, according to your When Will Your Favorite Pop Star Croak? chart, Mick Jagger is going to die when he's 83 years old. I mean, isn't he much older than that already?

TIM JESKEWITZ, WHARTON, PA

That's Keith you're thinking of.

DISAPPOINTED!

Blender, I'm disappointed. When, at the end of her Dear Superstar interview, Lil' Kim declared that she was bad at "nothing," how could your journalist have neglected to point out that she is bad at at least one thing? That's right: lying in court. You're losing it. Losing it!

RALPH COKELEY, EGG HARBOR, NJ

EUGENE ADEBARU (F)

5000 fast





The Like weren't allowed to rehearse until that lawn was mowed.

CURSE OF BLENDER

I knew when I saw Bob Denver's face on the spine of the June/July 2003 issue that he wouldn't be long for this world. Just promise me that from here on out you'll use your powers of death for good. OK, for good and for eliminating your enemies.

JASON LEWIS, ALLIANCE, OH

THE GREAT THINKER

Re the title of the Like's debut album, *Are You Thinking What I'm Thinking?*: What I'm thinking is how lucky they were to celebrate their graduation from high school with a deal from Geffen. All I got was 50 bucks.

BRIAN SILVERMAN, NORFOLK, VA

Hey, we didn't get anything, although we were, like, 27 at the time.

APPETITE FOR CORRUPTION

Re the recent payola scandal: While DJs "whoring" themselves out to record companies is a bad thing for many reasons, I did feel slightly heartened by the fact that one of the bands being promoted was Franz Ferdinand rather than some terrible *American Idol* reject.

BEN PROFFE, HECTOR, NY

SUPERFAN

BRINGING OUT THE STALKER IN YOU SINCE 2001



Michael Zorn and Bruce Springsteen



Ozzy Osbourne and Giancarlo Leonini



50 Cent and Jessi Banks



T. Jackson, Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith



Ryan Buol and Kelly Clarkson



Mariah Carey and Deniece Dykes

500 GREATEST SONGS LIST "NOT LONG ENOUGH!"

Oh! My! God! I can't thank you enough for your 500 Greatest Songs Since You Were Born! feature. I'm still downloading all the great stuff from the last 20 years that I'd completely forgotten about. How awesome to have a list like this that reflects what people actually listen to rather than just pretend. One complaint, though. It wasn't long enough!

JOHN PALENSCAR, COLUMBUS, OH

V FOR VERONICA

There was at least one glaring omission from your list: "Veronica." Not only is it definitely one of the best songs written since 1980, but it was written by two of the greatest songwriters ever: Elvis Costello and Sir Paul McCartney.

AMY BLOOM, YAKIMA, WA

SCREW "HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF!"

Screw "Hungry Like the Wolf"! What the hell were you thinking? As all good *Donnie Darko* fans know, "Notorious" is far superior. Sparkle Motion rule!

MEGAN BURRELL, REVERE, MA

A-OK!

I just wanted to write and say that any Greatest Songs list that features Nirvana and Junior Senior and Blur is A-OK with me.

SAM EFFRON, OVERLAND PARK, KS

Yep, everybody sure loved the 500 Greatest Songs Since You Were Born! list. Well, almost everybody ...

WINNER TAKES (ALMOST) ALL

I've just entered your competition to win the alleged Greatest Songs Since You Were Born. But, should I win, you can keep anything by the Backstreet Boys, thank you very much.

LEAH KELLY, SUN VALLEY, ID

SO WHY CAN'T MY FAVORITE SONG BE ON THE LIST?

OK, so I didn't expect the Buzzcocks' sublime "Why Can't I Touch It?" to necessarily make your top 10, or even the top 50. But why wasn't it on there at all? Why? Why?!?!?

SAM MOSS, FREDERICKSBURG, VA

Because the cutoff date was 1980, and it was released in 1979. Sorry.

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Franz Ferdinand regret not using advance money for swimsuits.



HIM's Ville Valo: "Tattoo my right shoulder? Preposterous."

LET'S (NOT) DANCE

500 songs and not one from David Bowie's *Let's Dance*? Not even "Let's Dance"! How do you sleep at night?

KAROL PAYNE, LEWISTON, ME

Poorly. But that's because of this fucker in the apartment upstairs who keeps playing *Let's Dance* over and over again.

GARTH FREAKIN' BROOKS?

Re the 500 Greatest Songs list: Garth Freakin' Brooks?

BRIAN MIN, NEW YORK CITY

FRANZ WHO?

Re Franz Ferdinand being the fourth-most-famous Franz of all time: Maybe it has something to do with my being 16 and a huge fan of Franz Ferdinand, but I've never heard of the other three.

JANIE SWINDEN, YORKTOWN, NY

GLACIAL RECEPTION

Reading your piece about HIM, I was moved to wonder why all Scandinavian bands are such moody metal bastards.

MARIA FITZGIBBONS, DEARING, MI

Sure, but at least ABBA aren't still around to torment us with their virgin-sacrificing, devil-worshipping death metal.

MITCH REMEMBERED

I just wanted to thank you for acknowledging Mitch Hedberg on the spine of your July issue. My husband enjoyed your magazine. Mitch and I were married for 6 years. We toured the country constantly and flew almost every week. I remember sitting next to Mitch on a flight and hearing him laughing. I looked up and he was reading one of the "Worst" something lists in *Blender*. He pulled out a pad and said, "I'm going to write *Blender* a letter," and proceeded to write one. I guess he never mailed it, because I recently found it. Thanks again. A lot of people miss Mitch very much.

LYNN SHAWCROFT, VIA E-MAIL



WIN ME!

IF POP STARS WERE DOGS...

Send us a photo with your name and address and who your dog happily resembles. If we print your photo, you'll win an iRiver H10 5GB MP3 player, complete with FM tuner and color screen to view photos!



AMY LEE OF EVANESCENCE



YURI WOLFINGTON

FARCICAL!

I just wanted to say that the fact that there wasn't a single Black Crowes track on your 500 Greatest Songs Since You Were Born! list—but that there were tracks by Ratt, PM Dawn, 'N Sync and A Flock of fucking Seagulls—makes the whole thing an absolute farce.

TAMI APARMA, TOMBALL, TX

Like a French farce? With long-lost twins and mistaken identities and people hiding under beds? Because we like those.

STRAIGHT TALKER

So, let's get this straight. On the one hand, innocent American lives are being lost on a daily basis in a foreign country we have no (non-oil-related) interest in, all so that the citizens of that country can supposedly enjoy all the freedoms that we have here, including freedom of speech. Meanwhile, on the other hand, when Kanye West declares—rightly—that our assclown president couldn't give a shit about black people, he gets censored?! Personally, I think the networks should grow a set and realize that freedom of speech is not just the freedom to say whatever the government decrees that you can.

DARYLL TWEID, HIBBING, MN

So, are you saying that Asia's "Heat of the Moment" should or should not have been on the list?

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YARDSTICK

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CATTLE PROD

Effective, but 10,000 volts left most people flopping on the floor like a bass.



FRAT PADDLE

Decent, but Snapmother wasn't down with spanking other dudes.



NIGHT STICK

Commanded respect, but left you more beat down than pumped up.



SLIM JIM

In the end, Snapmother found nothing motivates like 13 inches of spicy smoked meat.



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-Webbie

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hung out with Flex at his garage, talked car care and music and checked out his ragin' rebuilt and remixed rides.

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Webbie's album *Savage Life* with the banga "Give Me That" featuring Bun B is in stores now.



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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ... AND PLENTY YOU DON'T!

BURNER

"A FOREVER CATASTROPHE"

NEW ORLEANS WAS ONE OF AMERICA'S GREAT MUSICAL CENTERS. THEN CAME HURRICANE KATRINA. *BLENDER* ASKED SOME OF THE STARS WHO CALL THE GULF COAST HOME HOW THEY GOT OUT, WHAT THEY LOST AND WHETHER THE REGION CAN BOUNCE BACK

> NEW ORLEANS AND the Gulf Coast will forever be changed by the incomprehensible destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina. In addition to the staggering loss of life and property, the history of a region with one of America's richest musical heritages has been permanently altered. From the birth of jazz to the roots of rock & roll to the hip-hop revolution, the Big Easy has always been at the (very funky) heart of America's music.

"There are a lot of places I like, but I like New Orleans better," wrote Bob Dylan in his memoir *Chronicles*. "The city is one very long poem." But in September, the rhythm of that poem came to a crashing halt. In the days following Katrina's devastation, *Blender* spoke to artists with roots in New Orleans and its environs who have offered their own stories and thoughts on the tragedy. "We lost loved ones, we got people out there floating around dead in the water," says Master P. "This is real for us." ALAN LIGHT

MASTER P (PERCY MILLER)



"I still haven't heard from one of my uncles, but I found my father, and my wife found her sister and two kids. New Orleans got a lot of strong people. We're survivors and we gonna bounce back.

"We lost all the properties, but that ain't nothing. Most important are the lives that were saved. I want to help my people, so my wife and I started Team Rescue [teamrescueone.com]. Some companies are looking short-term, helping people for today, but after a while, people in shelters are really gonna start panicking. What's going to happen with their education, their kids, where are they going to find a job? Some of these people don't even have ID.

"I heard Kanye West's comment. I just hope he was sincere and not trying to sell an album. My whole thing is that we all gotta come together and forget about what happened yesterday, because we're gonna need everybody in order for us to overcome this. We got a lot of mourning to do, a lot of rebuilding to do. I ain't got time to waste. We gotta do this for our people."

LUCINDA WILLIAMS



"Around 1957, when I was about 4 years old, I was in one of the hurricanes. I remember being picked up by the National Guard to go to a shelter where we ate

Hostess cupcakes. It was kind of exciting—it created this sense of camaraderie.

"I think a lot of people probably thought they'd just board up the windows and have a hurricane party. OK, everybody hunker down and cook up some gumbo and crack open some beers and ride out the storm! Didn't work this time.

"I have numerous friends down there and I still haven't heard from them. New Orleans as we knew it is gone, just wiped off the map. The majority of the buildings from the 1700s in the French Quarter survived. It's ironic that the city is back to what it was when it started.

"I think there's a lot of racism involved in the response. And the fact that it's in the deep South—yes, George W. Bush is from Texas, but that's not the South, that's Texas. It's just ingrained, it's still there and it hasn't gone away."



Stranded victims of Hurricane Katrina get some assistance in evacuating the city.

BABY (BRYAN WILLIAMS)



"My property is all fucked up, but everybody's safe. I'm in Houston still staying in a hotel, trying to get a crib. Wasn't no niggas expecting this would happen, but once that levee broke, that was a wrap.

"From a scale of one to 10, I give the relief efforts a fucking one. They give a n-ga \$2,000 like that's what his whole life is worth. It makes it look racial to me because the people were poor and because it was in the South. If that shit would've happened in any other city—New York, Miami, L.A.—it never would've went on that long. Now there's people still stuck in those houses, the weak are dying and the strong are getting weaker. Motherfuckers waiting for food, waiting for clothes—it's terrible, it's a crisis, and the frustration just makes it worse.

"Right now, we gotta help old folks and kids. That shit is traumatizing. How are you supposed to bounce back? To me, there's really no hope—motherfuckers just gonna give up. You lost your wife, your sister, your nephew, that gonna leave you scarred for life. This is a forever catastrophe."

ARTHUR MINTZ DRUMMER, WORLD LEADER PRETEND



"I'm still waiting for all my family to get out of the city. My grandmother was in a hospital, stuck with no electricity, food and water. People outside were shooting.

"I was out the night before at midsummer Mardi Gras and hundreds of people were dressed up as Katrina. No one thought the storm was going to be that serious. Sunday morning I woke up and my neighbor was banging on my door telling me to get out, that the roads were closing. We grabbed toothbrushes, the dog, some records and clothing, and jumped in the car. It took us eight hours to drive to Baton Rouge, normally an hour away. I'm sure everything I left behind is demolished.

"A huge fire spread down the street where I grew up and I saw my friend's house burn down on TV. There were plans to rebuild the levees, but they couldn't get adequate funding. As long as I've been alive people have been saying that one day there's gonna be a storm that comes, and if the levees bust, the city's gonna just go up. Even still, it's impossible to believe."

DAVID BANNER



"I have an uncle in New Orleans. The water came up to his knees—on the second floor. The day after the storm, I sent my tour bus, loaded up with clothes and food.

"This is eight times worse than 9/11. I don't think the media are covering it to the degree of what it actually is. While people are saying everything is OK, my people are still dying. If this happened in New York, America would have reacted differently. Instead it was in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, and the faces that this affected the most were predominantly black, predominantly poor. The difference between one and two days of people reacting is 30,000 or 40,000 lives.

"When I went down to Biloxi and Gulfport, I saw that the whole coast is gone. You gotta think about Jackson, Mississippi, where I'm from, too. We didn't have enough money to fund kids to go to school, now we got thousands more. But the most blessed part about it was that we had the opportunity to see two things: how America feels about us and the power of God."



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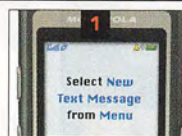
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HOTHEAD!

JACK WHITE loses his cool onstage when an errant bouncing ball and an overenthusiastic fan interrupt his flow



→ During a White Stripes show at Berkeley's Greek Theatre in August, a ball emblazoned with a local radio station logo landed onstage. Jack White stormed off the stage for five minutes.



→ White returned to the stage, but was again interrupted a few songs later when a fan snuck onto the stage during "Boll Weevil." The interloper put his arm around White and screamed into his microphone, paraphrasing a line from the song.



→ The fan then leapt off the stage, at which point White ordered the crowd to stare at the offender while he launched into a tirade that ended with the White Stripes asking the stage-crashing fan, "Did Mommy and Daddy drop you off at the wrong concert?"

NEWS ROUNDUP

According to insiders, **MICHAEL JACKSON** is seeking a more "macho" image. Plans include lifting weights and wearing shorter wigs.

Punk legend **JOHN LYDON** called Live 8 organizer Bob Geldof "too self-serving" and attacked the event, saying, "I don't think it achieved anything."

The three-year relationship between Incubus singer and Gap model **BRANDON BOYD** and Estée Lauder super-model Carolyn Murphy has ended. Work commitments meant the couple "grew apart."



Bruce Dickinson, moments after being egged by Sharon Osbourne.

EGGSPLOITATION

SHARON OSBOURNE THROWS EGGS AT **IRON MAIDEN**, CALLS BRUCE DICKINSON A PRICK, REFUSES TO APOLOGIZE

IT'S THE BEEF OF 2005: two of metal's heavyweights going at each other in a good, old-fashioned slugfest. In one corner, Sharon Osbourne, wife and manager of Ozzy; in the other, Bruce Dickinson, lead singer with British metal stars Iron Maiden.

Their feud went public on August 20, Maiden's final show of Ozzfest 2005 in Devore, California. When Iron Maiden took the stage, members of the Osbourne entourage, including Sharon and her daughter Kelly, hurled eggs and lighters at the veteran metalheads.

The troublemaking brood also cut the PA several times during the band's 60-minute set, angering many of the 45,000-strong audience. After Maiden finished, the 53-year-old matriarch appeared and delivered a speech in which she called Dickinson "a prick."

Maiden's manager, Rod Smallwood, described Osbourne's behavior as

"disgusting and unprofessional" and demanded an apology. Her response, however, was typically blunt: "Me and my daughter had a fucking blast. No one died. They'll be waiting a long fucking time for an apology from me!"

Osbourne claims the attack was in retaliation for comments made by Dickinson—most notably, his dissing of Ozzy for being a reality-TV star. She also stressed that Ozzy himself had played no part in the attack.

"He wouldn't stoop to something like this," Osbourne said, "but I'm a fucking bitch and have no problem with it ... Bruce Dickhead doesn't exist to me anymore."

Dickinson declined to comment on the affair, but irate Maiden fans have since made their feelings known at www.petitiononline.com, where one poster accused Sharon Osbourne of being "drunk on power and fame." **PAUL ELLIOTT**



"I HAVE THIS WHOLE PLAN TO SAVE THE WORLD."

JESSICA SIMPSON

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Carrie Underwood: "Are you ready to not rock?"

DO YOU ROCK?

CARRIE UNDERWOOD

DOES THE REIGNING AMERICAN IDOL WINNER, LIKE ... ROCK?

→ **Ever trash a hotel room?**

No! For fraternity formals, we'd party in a hotel, but didn't trash it.

Largest number of people you've woken up next to in a hotel bed?
None besides my mom.

Best rumor about yourself?
That I had a threesome with [fellow American Idol contestants] Anthony and Bo, which of course is not true.

Ever had a brush with the law?
On my 21st birthday, my friends and I made a ruckus out on the sidewalk in Oklahoma, so cops walked over to us.

Biggest celeb in your cell?
Jay DeMarcus from Rascal Flatts.

Ever wreck a car?
No.

Ever harbor a fugitive of the law?
No.

Practice black magic or any of the other dark arts?
Noooooo.

Ever get lucky on an airplane?
Not unless you mean getting an extra bag of peanuts.

It's dinnertime, what are you cooking?
Vegetables. If I cook, I make microwave meals.

Most decadent thing you've ever done?
I don't do anything. I'm the most boring person in the world. DAVE HILL

VERDICT

SHE ALMOST HAD US WITH THE SLEEPING-WITH-HER-MOM THING. BUT RASCAL FLATTS ON SPEED DIAL? HELL TO THE NO—CARRIE UNDERWOOD DOES NOT ROCK!



CARRIE UNDERWOOD'S DEBUT ALBUM WILL BE OUT IN NOVEMBER 2005.

NEWS ROUNDUP

CHRISTINA AGUILERA says her rivalry with Britney Spears is purely manufactured by false tabloids. "I wish nothing but the best for Britney, her husband and their family," she wrote in a message posted on fan website xtinaxposed.com.

SNOOP DOGG is suing Philadelphia auto dealer Gary Barbera of Gary Barbera's #1 DodgeLand for \$2 million for allegedly stealing his distinctive "izzle" speech pattern for a recent advertising campaign. In August, the same dealer was served with a similar lawsuit from 50 Cent for using his name and likeness without consent.

KEITH RICHARDS has apologized to Mick Jagger for saying in an interview that the singer's "cock's on the end of his nose. And a very small one at that."



"MY ALBUM IS GOING TO BLOW AWAY EVERYBODY'S."

PARIS HILTON



Welch and his adopted children: "I only meant to get a rug!"

FAMILY GUY

EX-KORN AXEMAN SWEARS OFF NEW CAR PURCHASES AND ADOPTS 212 INDIAN KIDS

IN BETWEEN WORKING on his solo debut and getting New Testament-inspired tattoos, Brian "Head" Welch, born-again ex-Korn guitarist, has given his 7-year-old daughter Jennea a brood of new siblings to play with: 212 to be exact.

Welch says he legally adopted the kids in June after setting up a nonprofit orphanage called the Head Home in Baligeria, India, the first of several homes he plans to erect throughout the world.

"I wanted to do something with my money other than buy BMWs," said the guitarist-cum-gospel-preacher. "I've been

selfish my whole life and I want to give something back."

The youngsters range in age from 3 to 16 and include orphans living on the streets and others who have been sold into brothels by their families. Their new digs have gardens, a petting zoo, classrooms, dormitories and a chapel where they learn about God.

But do the kids know about their new pop's debauched past? "They know that I am a famous rock star," Welch said, "but I ain't gonna bring the Korn CDs and go, 'Check this out!'" TONY MCENAMIN

BLENDER'S BURNING QUESTION

WHO WILL BE THE NEXT POP STAR TO RELEASE A FIVE-PART SINGLE?

SURVEY SAYS



READER WISDOM

"CLAY AIKEN! THAT GIRL IS CRAZY."
GABRIEL04-86,
PARLIER, CA

Log on to Blender.com for December's "BURNING QUESTION." One deserving reader will have his or her comment published in the next issue and win this **MOTOROLA V188**.





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ALMOST FAMOUS

THE VERONICAS

AUSTRALIA'S ROCKINGEST BOY-CRAZY TWINS ARE RICH LIKE OLSENS!

IT'S A GRAY, rainy Friday afternoon in Manhattan, and the Veronicas are skipping down the street. Ducking out of a photo shoot to grab a bite at a nearby diner, the 20-year-old cuties have politely declined *Blender's* umbrella—their new UGG boots be damned. After all, what's a couple hundred bucks when you've got a couple of million?

No matter how good your life may be, the Veronicas probably have it better. Twin sisters Jess and Lisa Origliasso grew up writing songs together in Brisbane, Australia, amassing nearly 60 by the time they graduated from high school two years ago. Courtied by several U.S. labels,

they finally signed with Sire for \$2 million—an unprecedented sum for a rookie act.

"It wasn't like, 'Here's the check, do whatever you want,'" says Lisa, the younger (by a minute) and self-proclaimed "girlier" of the two. "You have to pay certain people, spend money on the album, hire producers ..." Still, says Jess—sporting black nail polish and a T-shirt that reads FOR MATURE AUDIENCES ONLY—"It's pretty huge."

The label flew them to Sweden to record with reclusive teen-pop genius Max Martin and his partner Dr. Luke, the team responsible for Kelly Clarkson's flawless "Since U Been Gone." The

ALL ABOUT US!

FAVORITE SONG RIGHT NOW

"Sound Effects and Overdramatics" by the Used (Lisa)

FAVORITE BOOK

Archie comics. Basically, we are Veronica. (Lisa)

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY WHILE LISTENING

Playing air guitar in front of the mirror. (Jess)

TYPICAL NIGHT OF DEBAUCHERY

We're not allowed to say—we're underage! (Lisa)

resulting single, "4ever," is an explosive plea for love (and some other stuff) guaranteed to inspire singalongs at sleepovers nationwide.

"The album's about our lives," says Lisa, who's currently sharing a house in L.A. with Jess and five guys they met while recording there earlier this year. "We're growing up away from home, having experiences we've never had, going through relationships. When you're our age you've got a lot to say."

"Yeah," Jess laughs, elbowing her sister. "A lot to say about boys!"

OUT NOW THE SECRET LIFE OF THE VERONICAS SIRE

BY JOSH EELLS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY F. SCOTT SCHAFER



"WHEN YOU'RE OUR AGE
YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO SAY."

The Veronicas, left to right: Lisa Origliasso, Jess Origliasso.

LISA: LEOTARD BY CAPEZIO
GOLD EARRINGS BY BING BANG
JESS: LEOTARD BY CAPEZIO
GOLD EARRINGS BY BING BANG
BELT BY WYLIE WEAR

Hylan Blvd.

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WHEN WILL YOUR FAVORITE POP STAR CROAK?

#23 MARIAH CAREY

BIRTH DATE MARCH 27, 1970

CURRENT AGE 35

DEATH CALCULATOR STARTS AT AGE 79

CATEGORY YEARS ADDED/SUBTRACTED

Spiritual: Gospel "OK, God, get me through this" roots. +3

Neurotic: Creative songwriter, versatile vocalist, entrepreneurial. +4

Wedding woes: Married in 1993 (+2), divorced in 1998. "That period of my life was so damaging." -2

Diva disasters: *Glitter* movie and soundtrack bomb, Virgin deal tanks. -5

Meltdown: Babbling nonsensically on *MTV Cribs*, public breakdown, psychiatric therapy. -6

Identity issues: "I am eternally 12" vs. raunchy lyrics, calling her televised striptease on *TRL* no big deal. -3

Confidantes: Surrogate family of urban music artists Snoop, Dupri, Jadakiss and Styles P. +1

Love loss: Sudden death of close friend and musical soul mate ODB. -2

De-stressors: Now takes regular breaks. +1

Emancipation: Comeback album restores faith in Mariah's talent and fan appeal. +1

Sleepless: Night-owl lifestyle, sleep "still an issue." -2

Pet owner: Owns a cat named Willy D and a dog named Jack. +2

Fatty diet: Chowder, sushi, soda, rice cakes, tortilla chips. -3

ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY 68

PROJECTED YEAR OF DEATH 2038

Gerontologist DR. DEMKO: "Mariah needs to rest, relax, recharge with monthly stress-reduction getaways or 20-minute 'me appointments,' and keep her clothes on."

NEWS ROUNDUP

PETE DOHERTY scrapped with Razorlight singer Johnny Borrell backstage at a British festival. The drug-loving singer reportedly entered the rival band's dressing room and delivered an unprovoked head-butt to Borrell. Security broke up the fight.

Following their Live 8 triumph, **PINK FLOYD** turned down over \$150 million to reunite for a full tour. But Roger Waters has not ruled out playing together, saying, "I could even imagine us doing *Dark Side of the Moon* again."



Iraq Star contestants, clockwise from top: Mohammed Ahmed Younis, 26; Yasir Majid, 22; Rami Abdul-Wahab, 14.



OPERATION STARDOM

ASPIRING IRAQI POP STARS RISK THEIR LIVES TO WIN THE COUNTRY'S VERSION OF AMERICAN IDOL

THE BRAVE PEOPLE of Iraq are ready to risk life and limb—to be the next international superstar!

In a country where song, dance and western traditions are shunned and their participants ostracized or killed, 2,000 music hopefuls turned out this summer to compete for a record deal on *Iraq Star*, the war-torn country's version of *American Idol*. Airing on the Lebanese-financed satellite station Al Sumeria, the show attracts half of Iraq's television-viewing audience despite conflicting feelings about the Westernized culture it represents.

Judge Muhammad Hadi is even emerging as the Iraqi version of Simon Cowell by cultivating a grumpy, bad-cop persona. "You didn't prepare the song well. 'Slaughtered bird' is masculine, but you kept saying it in the feminine!" the judge sniped at one contestant who sang a folktale about a dead bird.

The 12 contestants who make it to the seventh and final round get an all-expenses-paid trip to Beirut in December, where the final show will be held outside the country, for security reasons. Though

controversial, the show has had a unifying effect. With contestants coming from all over the country, songs are sung in many of the Iraqi languages, including Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmen and Assyrian.

A 26-year-old barber is a frontrunner. Mohammed Ahmad Younis, a self-proclaimed failed artist who performed Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On," said his decision to perform was not easy. "I fear for my life," Younis said. "But what

"THEY TOLD ME THAT I'M AN INFIDEL."

can I do? This is my only shot."

Only a few women, however, have dared to brave the country's strict Islamic dictums against singing and dancing to try to become the Iraqi Kelly Clarkson.

One female contestant, 36-year-old Nada Samara, a flutist and music teacher, had her Baghdad apartment trashed after appearing on the show, and says her landlord cut off her electricity and water supply. "They told me I'm not respecting Islam, that I'm an infidel," Samara said. JOHANNA PIAZZA



"THE [KABBALAH BOOKS] ARE ALL IN HEBREW. I DON'T UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING."

BRITNEY SPEARS

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USEFUL TIPS FROM THE STARS

HOW TO ...

SEDUCE THE LADY OF THE HOUSE

Gardeners and pool boys, rejoice! Former landscaper turned R&B stud **BOBBY VALENTINO** shows you tricks to make your favorite housewife desperate.

BY STEVE KANDELL
PHOTOGRAPH BY LEGO



1

WATCH AND LEARN

"Personally, I don't think I would holla at a married lady. But if she came on to me, that's a different scenario. Sit back and observe from a distance all the things her man's not doing for her. If she's not happy with him, she's gonna let you know certain things. Then you can fill the void."

2

WINE AND DINE

"Don't go all the way hard at it—work your way in slowly, from a friendship point of view. Friendship always leads to other things. Don't overwhelm her with bouquets of flowers; just give her a single rose along with a cool card. Go to lunch somewhere in broad daylight so she doesn't feel like she's sneaking around."

3

CLOAK AND DAGGER

"Once you take the next step, be low-key with everything you're doing. Women are way slicker than men—they do more dirt and get away with it, while men leave too many clues. Cover your tracks by always calling from a private number, and take separate cars when you meet. Never get with her at her house."

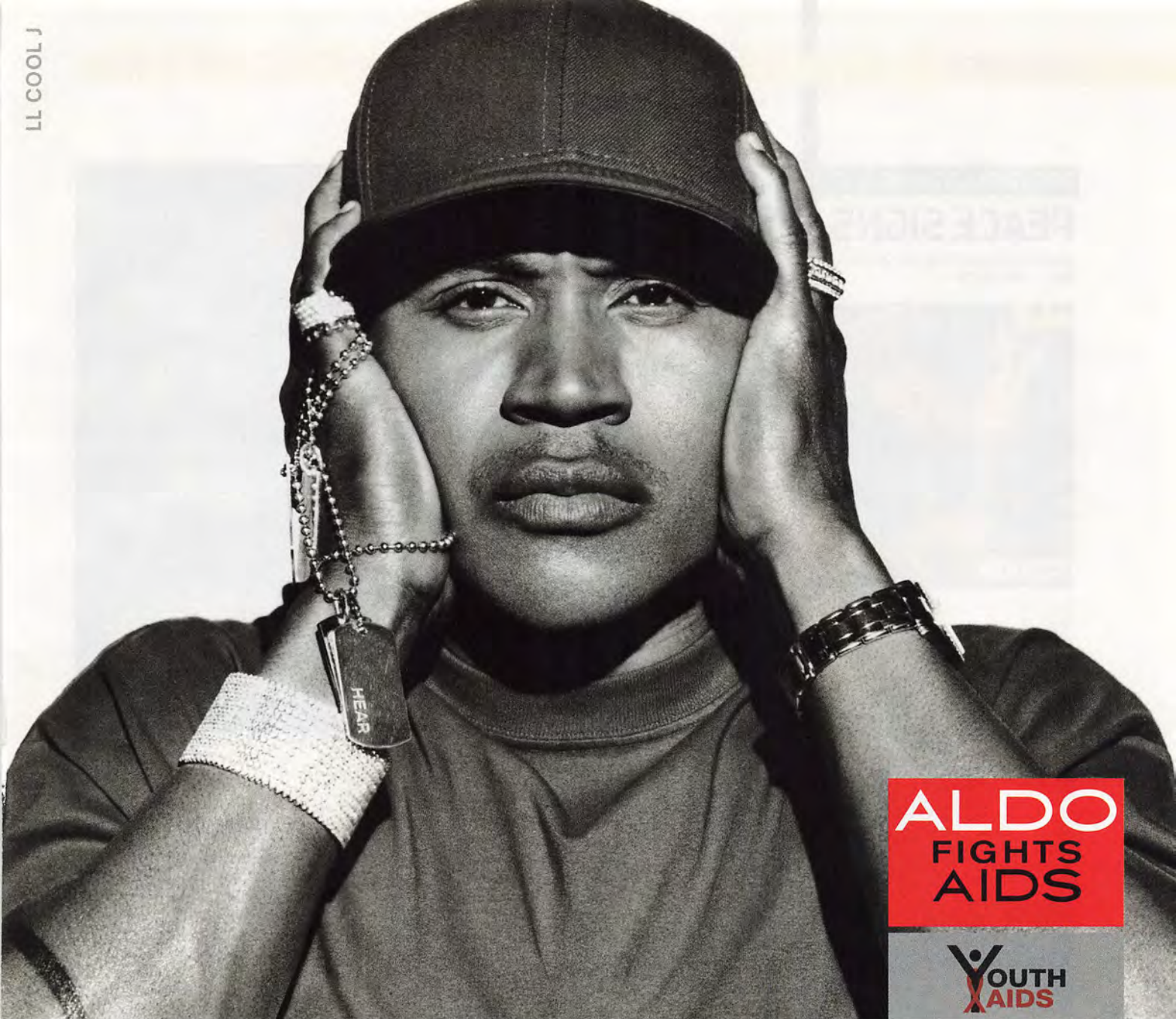
4

CUT AND RUN

"If you are feeling her, go along with whatever she wants to do—let her dictate the terms, because she's got more to lose than you do and you're just havin' fun. Don't get attached and always keep an eye on the door. And when you run, make sure you have another job lined up before shit goes down."

BOBBY VALENTINO (DTP/DEF JAM) IS OUT NOW

TANK TOP BY POLO RALPH LAUREN JEANS BY DIESEL SNEAKERS BY NIKE BRA AND PANTIES BY DIESEL PUMPS BY JEAN-MICHEL CAZABAT NECKLACE, BRACELET AND RINGS BY AGATHA



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POP STAR MUST-HAVE ↓

PEACE SIGNS

CELEBS LOVE GROUPIES, DRUGS, GUNS, SEX ... AND PEACE!



TOMMY LEE



PAULINA RUBIO



JAY-Z



FERGIE

NEWS ROUNDUP

ASHLEE SIMPSON has insisted her new single "Boyfriend," whose chorus includes the line "I didn't steal your boyfriend," is not about Lindsay Lohan or Simpson's close relationship with Lohan's ex-boyfriend Wilmer Valderrama.

JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE has successfully forced a settlement in his libel case against London tabloid *News of the World* over claims that he cheated on Cameron Diaz with model Lucy Clarkson. The singer issued a statement that said, "Yet again, a tabloid has been caught lying ... Have they no shame?"

EMINEM is being sued by an angry Irish lord. Henry Mountcharles is demanding compensation after the rapper pulled out of a concert at Slane Castle near Dublin that 80,000 fans were expected to attend.



Never call t.a.t.u. "lipstick lesbians."

GRISLY!

THE NEW VIDEO FROM **T.A.T.U.** IS TOO VIOLENT FOR TV

THE LAST TIME the pseudo-Sapphic Russian duo t.a.t.u. taunted censors, it was for the racy girl-on-girl content of 2001's "All the Things She Said" video.

This time, it's the brain-splattering violence in their comeback video, "All About Us," that has upset MTV executives, who have rejected the clip. "The girls wanted it to be really graphic," says director James Cox, who helmed the John Holmes biopic *Wonderland*. "We made a less violent version for TV."

In the graphic video, bandmember Julia Volkova is nearly raped by a stranger, then shoots him in the head. Waiting outside in the getaway car is her comrade Lena Katina. "You can extract a crazy empowerment castration fantasy from the text," Cox explains.

But Katina, whom Cox described as "not giving a fuck what people think," is happy with the final product. "My mom thinks it's a very beautiful movie and that we looked perfect," she says. **STEVE KANDELL**

WEIRD BAND ALERT

HARRY AND THE POTTERS

TWO BROTHERS DRESS LIKE HARRY AND PLAY "WIZARD" ROCK. ZOINKS!

INSPIRED BY HARRY POTTER, BY ANY CHANCE?

Yes, but this Norwood, Massachusetts, duo with a tinge of Andrew WK are not simply celebrating the Hogwarts crew. Their shows, mostly in libraries and bookstores, preach an urgent message: Reading is cool!

WAIT, THERE ARE TWO HARRYS?

"Having two makes our live shows surreal," explains Paul DeGeorge, 26, who plays alongside his keyboardist brother Joe, 18. "Harry is DIY—he's very punk rock."



Harry and the Potters simultaneously reach pubescence.

BUT ROCKING OUT IN LIBRARIES ... CAN THAT WORK?

Yes, particularly with fans, often attending their first concert ever, also dressed as junior wizards. According to Paul, when they play songs like "My Teacher Is a Werewolf," "books fly off the shelves." **STEVE LOWE**



"I HAVEN'T READ A BOOK IN MY LIFE."

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SELL OUT

2004

REUNION TOUR



Photos: Steve Jennings



**Over 2 Hours Of Music
From the Worldwide
Reunion Tour**

**43 Performances Including:
Here Comes Your Man
Gigantic
Bone Machine
Monkey Gone To Heaven**

ooooooooo - stop
your feet on the air and
trick and spin it, yes
head will collapse
there's nothing in it
and you'll ask yourself
There is my mind
There is my mind
There is my mind
lay out in the water
so it swimmin'
was swimmin' like the Caribbe
imals were hither behind
except the little
then they told me
spin' to talk to me going
There is my mind
There is my mind
There is my mind
lay out in the water
so it swimmin'
with your feet on the air and
try this trick and spin it, yes
our head will collapse
there's nothing in it
and you'll ask yourself
There is my mind
There is my mind
There is my mind
lay out in the water
so it swimmin'



WWW.RHINO.COM

HORNY

JULIETTE LEWIS CELEBRATES ANGLO-SAXON HISTORY AT A U.K. FESTIVAL



→ Perhaps inspired by the concert locale of Reading, Lewis dons a Viking helmet.



→ Grabbing her horns, she takes on the roles of ancient marauder and rock star.



→ Lewis fittingly finishes the set with the Stooges' "Search and Destroy."

NEWS ROUNDUP

A 20-year-old woman broke both her ankles and a wrist after climbing up and then falling off the rafters of Boston's Fenway Park during the recent **ROLLING STONES** concert.

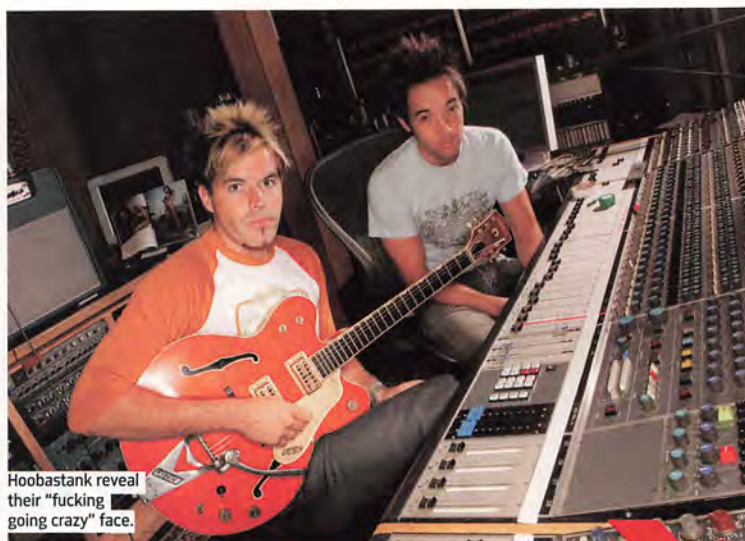
MARIAH CAREY has claimed that she often prayed to be kidnapped during her five-year marriage to music industry mogul Tommy Mottola. "I used to fantasize about that a lot," she revealed.

BRITNEY SPEARS gave birth to a baby boy on September 14 in Santa Monica, California, her first child and husband Kevin Federline's third.



"GAY MEN, OH THEY LOVE ME. I'M THEIR NEW CHER."

KELLY CLARKSON



Hoobastank reveal their "fucking going crazy" face.

IN THE STUDIO

"WE'RE F**CKING GOING CRAZY"

HOOBASTANK DEAL WITH THE PRESSURE OF A THIRD CD BY SPOONING LARGE PIGS

"I'VE NEVER BEEN more stressed in my life," says Doug Robb, singer for California suburb-rockers Hoobastank. "I've had a headache for two weeks straight."

No wonder. The quartet are currently outside L.A. polishing the sequel to 2003's triple-platinum *The Reason*. But they've also signed up—unwisely, it would seem—for a month-long tour of state fairs from Montana to upstate New York. "At the time, we thought it would keep us fresh," Robb says. "But there's absolutely no downtime. It's kind of a bitch."

After hearing a typical itinerary, *Blender* is convinced he's not just being a whiny rock star. "Last week we were in Eugene, Oregon. Then we drove down to Sacramento, played a show, drove back to L.A. and came straight to the studio. Then we flew out again to ... shit, where'd we go? Somewhere in Missouri. And then Des Moines, I think." He exhales slowly. "I'm fucking going crazy."

Yet despite the hellish schedule, they're still managing a little fun. "We've got pictures of us spooning some large pigs," Robb says of the fairgrounds.

Even so, pressure from the label isn't

helping the stress level. "I'm sure they want 'The Reason' again," Robb sighs, referring to the massive power ballad that ruled radio last summer. "Sad to say, there isn't any. There's slow songs, and songs about relationships. Oh, and we have Capt. Dale Dye of the U.S. Marine Corps!" Come again?

"He's been in a lot of movies, like *Saving Private Ryan*. We're going to have him pop in after a slow song, like, 'Aww, that was sweet, ladies!'—just ripping us about how bad we are." **JOSH EELLS**

ALL ABOUT OUR RECORD

ARTIST

Hoobastank

PRODUCER

Howard Benson

STUDIO

Bay 7 Studios, Valley Village, California

LAST ALBUM

The Reason, 2003

NEW ALBUM

As yet untitled, due December 2005

ALSO IN THE STUDIO

Actress turned R&B songstress **CHRISTINA MILIAN** is recording her fourth album with producers Rich Harrison and Cool and Dre at a studio in Miami.

California punk-rockers **AFI** are working on the follow-up to their 2003 album *Sing the Sorrow* at Los Angeles studio Sage and Sound with producer Jerry Finn.

Crunk rapper **PITBULL** is in his hometown of Miami to record the follow-up to last year's *M.I.A.M.I.*, with guests including Lil Jon, Diddy and Twista, among others.

Grunge band **MUDHONEY** are working on their eighth album, the follow-up to 2002's *Since We Have Become Translucent*, at Avast Studios in Seattle.

In a blind tasting of 21
of the world's finest vodkas,
which one did
The New York Times
declare their
“hands-down favorite”?

Clearly Smirnoff.

“What set Smirnoff apart,
we agreed, was its
aromas and flavors which
we described as classic.”

ERIC ASIMOV,
THE NEW YORK TIMES,
1/26/2005



ALMOST FAMOUS

KACI BROWN

BY NICK DUERDEN
 PHOTOGRAPH BY KENNETH CAPPELLO

A DARING TEENAGE POP THRUSH WHO QUOTES FROM A SELF-HELP GURU AND WANTS TO SKYDIVE

ON THE FREEWAY, about 60 miles outside Cincinnati, Kaci Brown wakes up and yawns. Mild exhaustion notwithstanding, this 17-year-old is incandescently enthusiastic. Her debut, *Instigator*, has just been released and she is on her first U.S. tour, supporting the Backstreet Boys, in her very own tour bus.

"And I'm loving every minute of it!" she gushes in helium tones.

Born in Sulphur Springs, Texas, Brown has the big brown eyes of Bambi and a singing voice that lands her between Jewel and Mariah Carey. And the impressively genre-hopping eclecticism

of *Instigator*—which slingshots from big ballads to energetic pop and low slung R&B—is reminiscent of Gwen Stefani's solo record.

"Ohmygod, do you think?" she screams. "In that case, I officially love you!"

Despite her proliferation of verbal exclamation marks, Brown is an old head on young shoulders, a girl who opted out of school by seventh grade to concentrate on songwriting and who signed her first publishing deal at 13. She also freely quotes from her favorite Christian motivational author, Roy L. Smith—"Discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability"

—and reveals that music isn't just a necessary outlet but an emotional crutch.

"It's my escape through hard times and sadness," she says. "I'm pretty deep. In many ways, I'm like every other 17-year-old girl, but because I've been home-schooled and around adults from a young age, I don't share the same experiences, and that can be tough."

Brown is still reassuringly adolescent as she happily confesses that she has a blossoming penchant for illicit temptations.

Tequila shots? Huffing? "I'm talking about skydiving," she says. "I want to go skydiving!"

OUTNOW *INSTIGATOR* DASLABEL/INTERSCOPE

ALL ABOUT ME!

FAVORITE SONG

"Just Want You to Know" by Backstreet Boys

FAMOUS CRUSH

Justin Timberlake—he's an amazing artist and I can't have him!

TYPICAL NIGHT OF DEBAUCHERY INCLUDES ...

Chocolate

MOST DIVA-LIKE DEMAND

Bigger hair



"I'M LIKE EVERY OTHER 17-YEAR-OLD GIRL,
 BUT I'M PRETTY DEEP."

SHIRT BY NOMAD TRIBE JEANS BY
 PARIS BLUES EARRINGS AND CHAIN
 BRACELET BY LISA LEVINE LEATHER
 CUFF BRACELET BY DIESEL



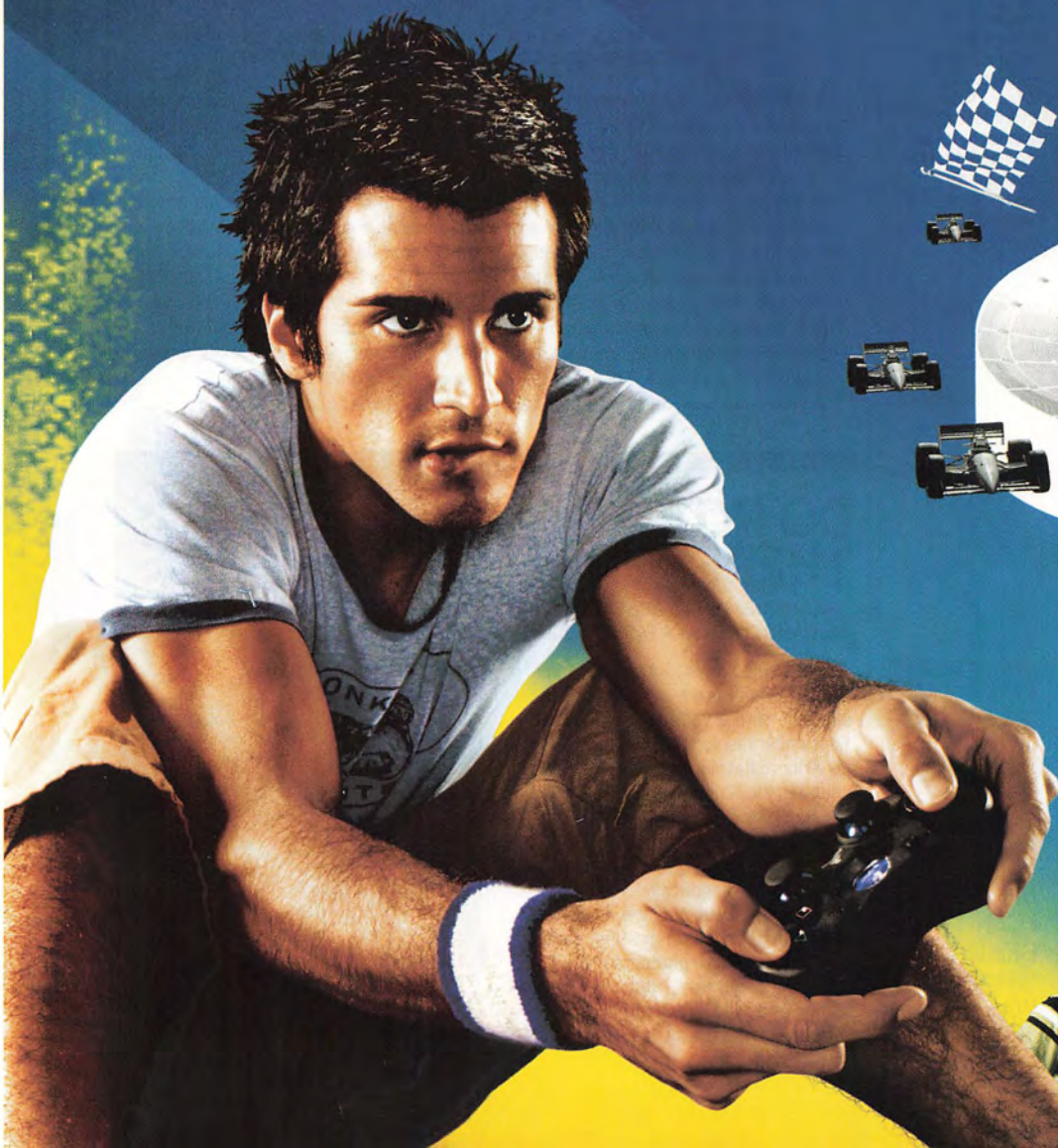
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Mostly coq.



COQ BLOCK

SLIPKNOT CRY FOUL OVER BURGER KING COMMERCIAL

NÜ-METALERS SLIPKNOT are fuming over the latest Burger King television marketing campaign, which they claim is ripping off their image.

The fast-food chain engineered a faux heavy metal band—consisting of six members who wear chicken masks and sing chicken-themed rock songs—called Coq Roq to promote their new food product, Chicken Fries.

According to a cease-and-desist letter sent to Burger King's lawyers, representatives of Slipknot claim that Coq Roq look and sound so much like them that viewers believe that the famously masked Des Moines band are affiliated with the franchise. The band threatened to sue if the commercial was not pulled.

But aiming to have it their way, BK lawyers counterattacked by pointing out that "many bands wear masks and/or makeup to accomplish a mask-like effect." Slipknot have declined to comment. TONY MCENAMIN



Slipknot look, uh, mad?

NEWS ROUNDUP

Georgia-born jazz singer **MADELEINE PEYROUX** responded to recent U.K. album-chart success by going missing. After hiring a detective, her label eventually found her in New York with her manager. "He said we should go away and leave her alone," said Bill Holland of Universal Classics and Jazz.

A Maryland judge has ruled that a couple offended by obscenities such as the word "fuck" featured on their daughter's **EVANESCENCE** album bought at Wal-Mart are entitled to a refund. Trevin and Melanie Skeens were startled to find explicit lyrics on an album that did not bear a parental advisory warning.



"SOME OF MY ALBUMS, I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT I WAS ON."

PAUL MCCARTNEY

LIFE AFTER ROCK



Above: 1980s metal. Right: 1680s metal.

RIK FOX

THEN

BASSIST, W.A.S.P.,
MARCH 1982–JUNE 1982

"I GOT THE IDEA for the name W.A.S.P. when, one day, I saw this hornet on the ground and stepped on it. I told [singer]

Blackie Lawless and he goes, 'That's cool. I like that.' But after a few months, Blackie decided he didn't like me anymore and kicked me out of the band. So I joined Steeler and played with Yngwie Malmsteen. After that I was in Sin. David Lee Roth saw us play and ripped off our costume ideas. When Sin broke up, I put together Thunderball, which got great reviews, but then Seattle grunge hit."

NOW

LIVING HISTORY REENACTOR
VALLEY VILLAGE, CALIFORNIA

"AS A KID, I fancied myself a swashbuckler, so after the rock thing folded, I started attending Renaissance Faires and joined a pirate group. Now I am on the festival and the military timeline reenactment circuits as a Winged Hussar—the most awesome, fearsome and beautiful cavalry in all of Europe. I realized at the Faires that no one was representing Poland, so I put together a costume. People either made snide jokes, or they'd say, 'You're on to something.'"

AS TOLD TO DAN KAPELOVITZ

DO NOT GO THERE!

BRANDY AND TENNIS ACE SERENA WILLIAMS CLASH AT A FASHION SHOW

"OH NO, SHE did not just say that," was perhaps what Brandy was thinking when she gave Serena Williams the hand at a September fashion show in New York.

Prior to flashing the stop sign, Brandy snubbed the tennis star backstage because, she explained, Williams had failed to return the pop star's calls. "If I did, it wasn't on purpose," Williams responded apologetically.

All seemed well until the women took their seats. "Venus sat between Serena and Brandy," said a photographer who heard their argument. "But when Serena leaned over to talk to Brandy, Brandy raised her hand to stop her." NOEL BODDIE



Brandy: "Talk to the hand."



"Hey, you didn't talk to the hand!"

COQ ROQ: PR NEWswire PHOTO SERVICE/NEWSCOM; SLIPKNOT: GIRONCORBIS SYGMA; FOX: COURTESY OF RIK FOX (2); BRANDY: SPLASH NEWS; MCCARTNEY: WIREIMAGE.COM/ILLUSTRATION BY GARY FRENCH

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Ad Carabao: Fighting for the right to watch cocks fight.

BIRD MAN

A THAI ROCK STAR DEFENDS COCKFIGHTING, IN SONG



COCKFIGHTING HAS BECOME the unlikely subject of one of the most popular records in Thailand.

Thai folk-rock star Ad Carabao, known for singing about such divergent topics as political unrest and his own energy drink, has released "Vaccine for Life," a song advocating that roosters, which can spread lethal avian influenza, be vaccinated, not exterminated. Cockfighting is one of Thailand's national pastimes.

"[Killing the birds] is not about the flu," said Carabao, who in addition to being a pop star is the head of the Association of Thai Fighting Cocks Career Promotion. "It's about the government—the people who just think about money."

Carabao's *Big Mouth 5: Bird Flu* has sold 100,000 copies. LAUREN HARRIS

OBITS

R.L. BURNSIDE
78, September 1, in Memphis, Tennessee, of heart failure. Hypnotic Mississippi singer and guitarist synonymous with raw-blues merchants Fat Possum Records. In 1996, he teamed with indie rockers Jon Spencer Blues Explosion on the album *A Ass Pocket of Whiskey*.

BOB MOOG
71, August 21, in Asheville, North Carolina. Inventor of the synthesizers that bear his name, popularized by the biggest groups of the '60s and '70s including the Beatles, Pink Floyd and Parliament-Funkadelic. Moog was diagnosed with brain cancer before his death.



Suge Knight on a stretcher after being shot in the leg.

WHO SHOT SUGE?

WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE for putting a bullet into the leg of Tha Row CEO **SUGE KNIGHT** at a pre-VMA party at Miami's Shore Club? Not these celebrities, if you are prepared to believe the (suspiciously) ironclad alibis they gave *Blender*. JOHANNA PIAZZA



SHAQUILLE O'NEAL

"SHOOTING? WHAT? OH YEAH. I WASN'T THERE. NOPE, WASN'T THERE."



LINDSAY LOHAN

"I WAS AT A BENEFIT IN THE HAMPTONS. I WASN'T IN MIAMI YET."



JOHN CONWAY OF THE BRAVERY

"WE WERE IN OUR ROOMS AT THE HOTEL, BUT NOT THE CLUB WHERE THE SHOOTING HAPPENED."



AARON CARTER

"I WAS AT THE OCEAN DRIVE PARTY AT THE LOEWS HOTEL ALL NIGHT. O.J. CAN VOUCH FOR US."



JORDAN KNIGHT, FORMER NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

"I WAS IN MY BULLETPROOF LIMO AND QUICKLY PULLED A U-TURN WHEN I HEARD THE GUNSHOTS."

POP HISTORY

1945 - 2011 // THE ROLLING STONES FAIL TO RETIRE



→ The Rolling Stones first hinted at their intentions to retire during their very first tour, when Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were still toddlers.



→ During the '70s, the band's constant declarations that whatever tour they were on might be the last one were given added credence by Richards's perilous drug intake.



→ Even the nuclear war of 2010 failed to stop them. But it did prove that only roaches and Richards, as Bill Hicks once said, would survive the apocalypse.

WRITTEN BY CLARK COLLIS // ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN JAY

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SONGS YOU SHOULD DOWNLOAD THIS MONTH

CAMERON CROWE, DIRECTOR OF *ELIZABETHTOWN* AND SOUNDTRACK GEEK EXTRAORDINAIRE, SELECTS HIS ALL-TIME FAVORITE MOVIE TUNES

- 1 **HARRY NILSSON**
"JUMP INTO THE FIRE"
GOODFELLAS (ATLANTIC)
A perfect Scorsese marriage of visuals and song. And, of course, a lot of blow.
- 2 **AIMEE MANN**
"WISE UP"
MAGNOLIA (REPRISE)
One of my favorite Aimee Mann songs, used here to a worshipful degree.
- 3 **HENRY MANCINI**
"MOON RIVER"
BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S (RCA)
Audrey Hepburn, Henry Mancini, Blake Edwards—all at their JFK-era peak.
- 4 **ERIC CARMEN**
"ALL BY MYSELF"
BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY (ISLAND)
Operatic misery from an ex-Rasperry, empathetically karaoked by Renée Zellweger.
- 5 **MIKE OLDFIELD**
"TUBULAR BELLS"
THE EXORCIST (WEA INTERNATIONAL)
The "Smells Like Teen Spirit" of creepy themes.
- 6 **PIXIES**
"WHERE IS MY MIND?"
FIGHT CLUB (RESTLESS)
Ideal world-crumbling-around-Edward-Norton-and-Helena-Bonham-Carter tune.
- 7 **NICO**
"THESE DAYS"
THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS (HOLLYWOOD)
Wes Anderson digs deep into his vinyl stash ...
- 8 **THE ROLLING STONES**
"SHE SMILED SWEETLY"/"RUBY TUESDAY"
THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS (HOLLYWOOD)
... and then does it again.
- 9 **THE DELFONICS**
"DIDN'T I (BLOW YOUR MIND THIS TIME)"
JACKIE BROWN (MAVERICK)
Quentin Tarantino is one of the best when it comes to needle-drops, and this is his genius on full display.
- 10 **HARRY NILSSON**
"EVERYBODY'S TALKIN'"
MIDNIGHT COWBOY (CAPITOL)
A song forever connected to a film, and brilliantly so.
- 11 **THE BEATLES**
"I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER"
A HARD DAY'S NIGHT (CAPITOL)
John Lennon knew how to use a microphone, and Richard Lester knew how to shoot it.
- 12 **MARVIN GAYE**
"TROUBLE MAN"
TROUBLE MAN (MOTOWN)
Never has a title song towered so far above its movie.
- 13 **ELVIS PRESLEY**
"THE WALLS HAVE EARS"
GIRLS! GIRLS! GIRLS! (RCA)
Elvis, from his Spanish toreador mode. As authentic as a microwave burrito, and just as essential.
- 14 **CAT STEVENS**
"DON'T BE SHY"
FOOTSTEPS IN THE DARK: GREATEST HITS VOLUME TWO (A&M)
Not, sadly, on the *Harold and Maude* soundtrack, but the stand-out track in a film full of Cat Stevens melancholy.
- 15 **MARK KNOPFLER**
"GOING HOME (THEME OF THE LOCAL HERO)"
LOCAL HERO (WARNER BROS.)
A beautiful, lyrical score piece.
- 16 **NEIL YOUNG**
"PHILADELPHIA"
PHILADELPHIA (SONY)
Epic heartbreak.
- 17 **CHEAP TRICK**
"DOWNED"
OVER THE EDGE (WARNER BROS.)
Long before Molly Ringwald turned 16, there was this suburban teen-rock classic.
- 18 **IGGY POP**
"LUST FOR LIFE"
TRAINSPOTTING (CAPITOL)
Iggy equals the frenetic energy of Danny Boyle's glorious vomit fest.
- 19 **RICHARD STRAUSS**
"ALSO SPRACH ZARATHUSTRA"
2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (RHINO)
Big Elvis never took the stage without it.
- 20 **THUNDERCLAP NEWMAN**
"SOMETHING IN THE AIR"
THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT (SONY)
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RICK THORNE

Photo: Danny Liao



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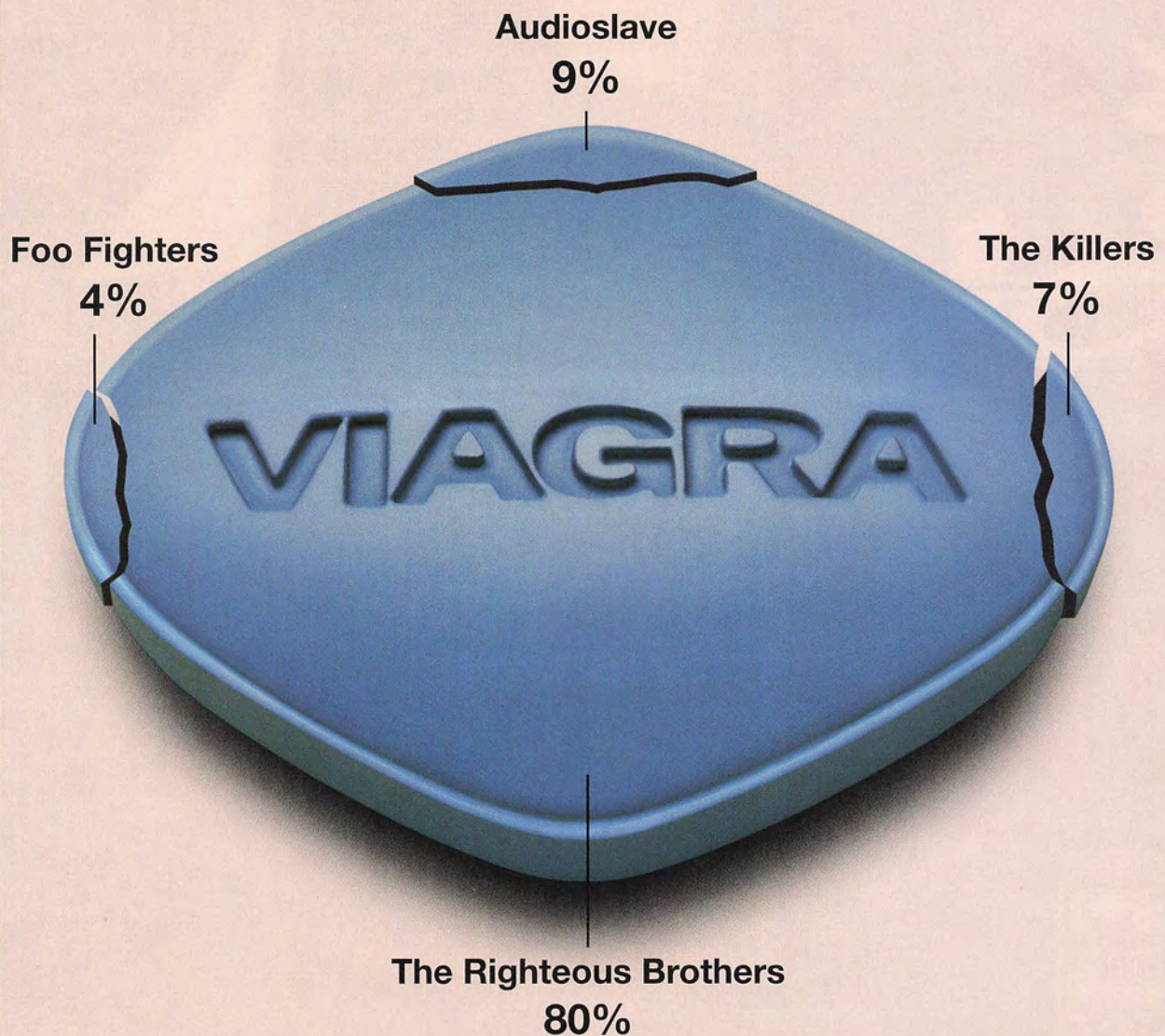
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'FESSES UP (P. 84)



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Juelz Santana
contemplates his
mixtape output,
considers getting
a better office.



STREET LEGAL



EARLY LAST SUMMER, Compton gangsta rapper the Game had a lot of dissing to do. His debut album, *The Documentary*, had been out for only half a year, and already he'd made enemies of Jay-Z, who'd called the Game out in a radio freestyle attack, and 50 Cent, who had publicly kicked the Game out of his G-Unit crew for "disloyalty." In hip-hop, nothing is quite so important to a rapper as his street rep—and nothing mars it like a challenge left unanswered.

"50 Cent and G-Unit pissed me off," the Game says, "and in a beef, you have to get your stuff out quick." So he wrote 15 minutes of rhymes directed at 50, G-Unit and Jay-Z's Roc-A-Fella roster, unloading them over a beat stitched together out of sampled 50 Cent, Kanye West and Jay-Z hits. A few weeks after "300 Bars and Runnin'" was completed, the Game released it on a homemade CD decorated with a Photoshopped image of the MC holding 50 Cent's decapitated head. "It had to go on a mixtape," the

Game says. "I could never have put that on an album."

RECORDED FOR PEANUTS AND SOLD ON STREET CORNERS, HIP-HOP MIXTAPES HAVE RAPIDLY BECOME THE FORUM FOR NEWCOMERS TO GET DISCOVERED AND FOR SUPERSTARS TO AIR THEIR BEEFS. THEY'RE ALSO LARGELY ILLEGAL. AND, OH YEAH: THE MAJOR LABELS LOVE THEM

BY JONAH WEINER ★ PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL LEWIS

The Game is one of many big-name rappers who have sidestepped the system to release music via mixtapes—cheap, speedily manufactured CDs stuffed with rare and unreleased songs and sold nationwide through tiny local record stores, the Internet and natty blankets laid across city pavements. Mixtapes, which enjoy no label backing, never yield MTV videos and never grace the racks of Sam Goody or FYE, are nonetheless crucial to the hip-hop industry—if you want to know what's going on in the genre, mixtapes are the place to hear it. Like ring-tones, Wal-Mart-only record deals and dignity-depleting reality-TV series, mixtapes also illustrate how musicians are increasingly

leaving traditional music-biz channels to reach audiences. Cam'ron, a veteran Harlem rapper who, aided by his Diplomats crew, began releasing mixtapes after two major-label albums, puts it succinctly: "Mixtapes are the new hustle."



MIXTAPES, WHICH HAVE existed in some form or other since hip-hop's mid-'70s birth, fall into roughly three categories. The first, and most common, are compilations of unreleased songs by multiple artists, curated by a DJ—songs can include a single that's not set to hit radio for months, a song created especially for the mixtape, a "blend," which lays the vocal from one song over another's beat, or an entirely new →

"freestyle" rap delivered over an existing hit. The second are "artist mixtapes," which 50 Cent popularized in 2002; these feature just one MC or crew, and resemble traditional albums. The third are "vs." tapes or "hits" tapes, in which a DJ tosses together songs that have already been released, either to compare two warring rappers or to cash in on a lucrative catalogue. (Since such tapes require little more than a P2P service to compile and don't offer fans anything new, they're regarded with disdain by rappers and more credible DJs.)

The lines between the first two categories are fluid, a fact that was demonstrated on a recent afternoon in Boston. The DJ Clinton Sparks was in his basement studio, putting the finishing touches on a mixtape by the Virginia duo Clipse called *We Got It 4 Cheap, Vol. 2*, which features mostly freestyles, one thunderous new song called "Zen" and a song meant to appear on Pharrell Williams's upcoming solo album. The walls in Sparks's studio are decorated with platinum records that artists have personally inscribed over the years: "Thanx 4 your support—Jay-Z"; "Stay cool, God Bless—50." Sparks bounced around the room in white athletic socks, segueing between tracks with bomb effects and scratches and regularly triggering the sampled voice of a child sneering, "Get familiar!," Sparks's catchphrase.

"Mixtapes are the only option open to Clipse if they want to release music," Sparks says. Since releasing their 2002 debut, *Lord Willin'*, Clipse have endured an effective three-year hiatus, stuck in contractual limbo after their label, Arista, dissolved and a trail of fine print led to an unhappy partnership with Jive. While they try to extricate themselves, their long-completed second album, *Hell Hath No Fury*, gathers dust. Thanks to mixtapes, though, they can remind fans that they still exist. After Sparks is finished, *Cheap* will be mastered, pressed onto 20,000 discs by "this guy in Brooklyn" and mailed to retailers for sale within a week.

Mixtapes have become invaluable not

"YOU CAN HAVE FUN, YOU CAN PUT OUT EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO," SAYS JUELZ SANTANA.

"MIXTAPES ARE LIKE CRACK."

merely in Clipse's situation but also to established superstars like Jay-Z, Snoop Dogg and Eminem, all of whom released mixtapes with several multiplatinum albums under their belts. "Mixtapes are the largest street corner in the world," says Seth Fernald, who runs mixtapesusa.com, one of the Internet's best sources, alongside mixunit.com and mixtapekings.com. "You have to keep coming back to the corner and telling people you're still there."

"The mixtape audience is more under-

ground, it's more real," says Juelz Santana, a Cam'ron protégé who signed to Def Jam in 2002 off the strength of his mixtape presence. "It's fans going out to support you—they don't hear any commercials on the radio, they don't see any videos on TV, they gotta actually go in the store and check for your mixtape."

Usually, hip-hop flips the indie-rock stance on "selling out"—for most rappers,

selling out is a welcome condition of success. When they talk about mixtapes, though, otherwise ostentatious MCs do an interesting thing: They say they don't make a penny from them. "We make so much money," says Santana. "What about those people who can't afford to buy an album every time? Mixtapes are a give-back." (Tapes usually sell online for \$7, in stores for around \$5.)

Cam'ron is the king of the mixtape scene—with the Diplomats, he has released nearly 20 mixtapes in the past three years,

FIVE MIXTAPE CLASSICS

GREY-MARKET LEGENDS THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF HIP-HOP

1 50 CENT FEAT. NOTORIOUS B.I.G., "THE REALEST NIGGAS"

Available on: *Whoo Kid*, *Max Payne 2*

The only place on earth to hear this raucous duet—composed of a boastful 50 freestyle, a menacing, brand-new beat and posthumous Biggie lyrics—was the mixtape circuit. That is, until mind-blown radio DJs made it one of the biggest rap records of 2003.

2 DJ SCREW, "JUNE 27"

Available on: *DJ Screw, June 27*

In the mid-'90s, this Houston genius and master of the Southern mixtape circuit recorded hundreds of slowed-down mixes before he OD'd on prescription cough syrup in 2000. Paul Wall samples the single continuous mix in his song "Sittin' Sidewayz."

3 NOTORIOUS B.I.G., "MO MONEY, MO PROBLEMS"

Available on: *DJ Clue?, Show Me the Money, Pt. I*

Ernesto Shaw made his name stealing unreleased music from studios and debuting it on his mixtapes—which he did here, premiering what would become one of Biggie's most famous songs well before *Life After Death* came out.

4 JAY-Z, "TAKEOVER (LIVE)"

Available on: *Kay Slay, Streetsweepers Pt. 7*

Headlining 2001's Hot 97 Summer Jam concert, Jay brought out Michael Jackson—but the main event was this blistering diss of Nas and Mobb Deep. Kay Slay quickly rush-released the track, kicking off the infamous feud between Nas and Jay.

5 CAM'RON FEAT. JUELZ SANTANA, "OH BOY"

Available on: *Diplomats Vol. 1*

This boisterous chunk of chipmunk soul led off the first Diplomats crew mixtape, landed protégé Juelz Santana a deal and—when it later appeared on Cam'ron's third album—helped Cam earn his first platinum plaque. *JONAH WEINER*



and by the time this article sees print there should be two or three more available. The Diplomats are like the rap Grateful Dead, an adored cult phenomenon whose liveliest material circulates outside traditional avenues. The Diplomats seem to put out albums in between mixtapes, not vice versa: "We got so much music, our distribution doesn't work as fast as we do," Cam'ron says. Santana, who helped Cam'ron pioneer a strange, aggro-surrealist rapping style on Diplomats tapes, adds that they are a great place to experiment, a medium for pure expression unfettered by costly sample clearances and bothersome label execs. "You can play around, you can have fun, you can put out everything you want to," he says. "Mixtapes are like crack."

If the Diplomats have a permanent mixtape residency, most rappers treat the circuit as a kind of Schwab's drug counter—a place where hopefuls go to be discovered. According to Kevin Liles, executive vice president of Warner Music Group, for an unknown MC, "having a top DJ endorse you on a mixtape is everything." In 2002, a young rapper named 50 Cent paired with DJ Whoo Kid and recorded a string of fierce tapes that →

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caught Eminem's attention. Eminem signed 50, whose debut, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, posted the highest first-week sales of any debut, ever. "50 Cent blew the mixtape scene wide open," says Seth Fernald. Labels, eager to break the next 50, began scouring tapes for hot talent and begging DJs to support new signees. "All the labels approach me," says Clinton Sparks. "Like 'Oh, we need you to get this guy on your mixtape.'" Whoo Kid says he routinely charges some rappers "\$5,000 for a slot, \$20,000 to do a whole tape—provided you're not wack."



DESPITE THE DIY vibe, it's clear that you can make a nice living off mixtapes. "The highest-selling Diplomats mixtapes were Vol. 5 and Juelz Santana's *Back Like Cooked Crack 2 (More Crack)*," says Diplomat Records A&R rep Duke Da God. "They both sold over 25,000 copies, and we see about three, four dollars off each copy." This breaks down to roughly \$87,500 for a mixtape (less the costs of manufacture and distribution, which Duke says are "low-end"). Or, put another way: Cam'ron drives a Lamborghini.

The biggest checks come from the paid gigs an artist like Cam'ron (or a DJ like Kay Slay) is offered as a result of mixtape buzz. In this regard, bootleggers, normally loathed,

are celebrated as a promotional asset. Clinton Sparks agrees. "Do you care about making \$40,000 off a mixtape or about getting 10 gigs at \$20,000 each because you've got the most talked-about CD in the streets?"

No one knows about profiting from mixtapes better than Southern rappers. Ignored for years by East Coast-centric labels, they had to create a mixtape version of the Chitlin Circuit. "We'd load up a truck with CDs and go on a route," says Chamillionaire, a 25-year-old Houston MC whom Universal just signed. "We'd hit Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, even Virginia, putting up fliers and meeting store owners."

Chamillionaire says he sold 80,000 copies of his three-disc mixtape album, *Mixtape Messiah*, with about \$10 profit for every copy sold. "There's a lot of major-label artists that have videos on TV that aren't seeing the type of money we were seeing in the streets," he chuckles. Slim Thug, Mike Jones and Young Jeezy are just several of the Southern artists who have recently translated mixtape followings into major-label breakthroughs.

Whoo Kid insists that up north, though, there's "no money" in selling tapes. "The real money is in rappers paying you for slots, or in corporate sponsors. I use mixtapes to promote sneakers, alcohol, cigarettes, whatever." Whoo Kid says the videogame



Trapped in record-label limbo, Clipse rely on mixtapes as their sole musical output.

company Rockstar paid him "40, 50 G's" to name his tapes after leading titles *Grand Theft Auto* and *Max Payne*. Mentally calculating his endorsement deals, touring revenue and salary as a programmer for Sirius satellite radio, Whoo Kid boasts, "A top DJ like me could make, like, 500 G's a year."



BY AND LARGE, major labels have warmed to mixtapes. "You're supposed to only record for your label," says the Game. "But labels see the promotional value of mixtapes, and they look the other way." Indeed, they have worked them into their marketing plans—a source at Def Jam says that the label actually

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When it comes to mixtape legends, 50 Cent is No. 1 with a comically oversized bullet.



The Diplomats represent Harlem (and Sacramento and Utah and ...)



The Game wants you ... to, you know, if it's not too much trouble, not buy so much G-Unit stuff.

50 CENT: NIGEL PARRY/CORBIS SYGMA; DIPLOMATS: ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN/CORBIS OUTLINE; GAME: SEBASTIAN ARIZONA LTD.

wants Young Jeezy, whose official Island Def Jam debut, *Let's Get It*, is only a few months old, to slow his mixtape output, fearing he has already "oversaturated the scene." Labels have even signed DJs and released official "mixtapes"—stripped of their black-market allure, though, they've performed poorly. Kevin Liles has someone in his office who works full-time scouting mixtapes for new talent. "That's his whole job," says Liles. "To catch the things I miss."

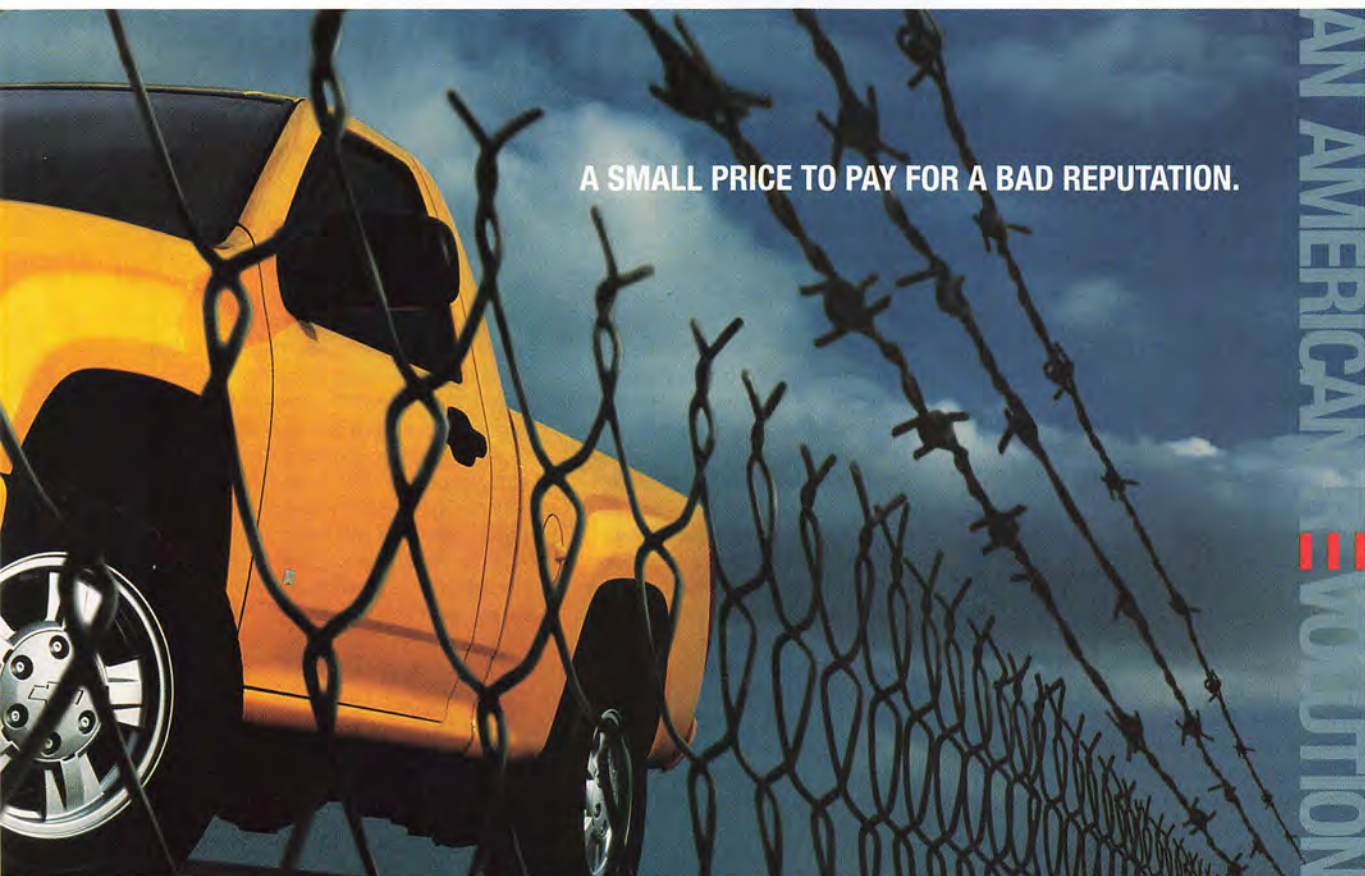
Meanwhile, the trade group that represents the labels, the Recording Industry Association of America, has sent mixed messages. Over the past few months, the RIAA has overseen raids across the country, in

conjunction with local police, of retailers they accuse of selling "pirated" material, confiscating mixtapes in the process.

Brad Buckles, the association's executive vice president for anti-piracy, admits mixtapes are a hazy area: "If you look at what people call mixtapes, it covers quite a range of product." Buckles says mixtapes are problematic when rappers freestyle over other rapper's beats, which, it turns out, is approximately 99% of the time. So far, though, the only people to feel any pressure are stores. "We go after the retailer," says Buckles. "And we try to follow things back up the supply chain." This creates an odd irony, since labels and artists themselves provide

many mixtape DJs with material. But Clinton Sparks says he has never been approached by the RIAA and he knows of no other top-name DJs who have, either.

The threat might be more insidious, though, so long as DJs like Whoo Kid sell product placement on their mixtapes, or labels make deals with DJs, offering them, say, an exclusive Jadakiss song if they'll give a certain new artist play. Mixtapes, long celebrated as an uncorrupted expression of "the streets," could be in danger of becoming just another arm of major-label marketing machines. Or worse: Whoo Kid recently finished a mixtape for 50 Cent's pal Lloyd Banks—hosted by Donald Trump. [BLENDIER]



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Ask Blender

◊ SOLVING POP CONUNDRUMS SINCE 2001

WHO WAS THE FIRST FEMALE RAPPER? WAS IT QUEEN LATIFAH?

SIMON TERRACCIANO, NYACK, NY

No way. Numerous women were rocking mics long before Latifah or even the various Roxannes (Roxanne Shanté, the Real Roxanne, etc.). Among them—would you believe—was future neo-soul star Angie Stone, then known as Angie B (Angela Brown). She was one-third of the early-'80s female rap trio Sequence, along with Gwendolyn Chisolm and Cheryl Cook, who scored hits from 1980 through 1982 while signed to Sugar Hill Records.

Before them, the first truly visible female MC was Sha Rock (Sharon Greene), the "One" in the Funky Four Plus One, a crucially important group that helped introduce rap to mainstream America by performing on the February 14, 1981, episode of *Saturday Night Live* (hosted by early rap fan Debbie Harry). Sha Rock later formed a kind of female rap supergroup called Us Girls, with Lisa Lee and Debbie Dee, and appeared in the 1984 breakdance movie *Beat Street*.

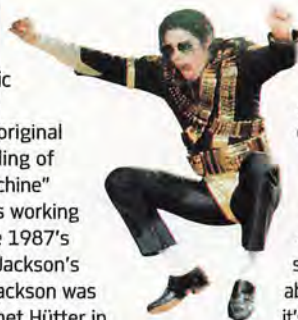
Incidentally, one of the Funky Four, Lil' Rodney Cee (Rodney Stone), went on to marry and have a child with Angie B, a.k.a. Angie Stone.

DID MICHAEL JACKSON REALLY WANT KRAFTWERK TO PRODUCE *BAD*?

FRANKLIN MARTIN ASTIN, VENTURA, CA

Probably not. In a recent interview, Kraftwerk's Ralf Hütter dismissed this and the story of a similar request from Elton John as "so many rumors." But, unlikely as it may sound, the German electronica pioneer and the King of Pop did in fact meet. (Think about it: Both acts combined cutting-edge electronic beats with poppy melodies, and neither party exactly lacked eccentricities.)

According to former Kraftwerk bandmate Karl Bartos, Jackson first phoned the Teutonic troupe in 1985 asking permission to use the original 1978 multitrack recording of the song "The Man-Machine" for new material he was working on (either what became 1987's *Bad* or, possibly, Janet Jackson's 1986 *Control* album). Jackson was rebuffed, but he later met Hütter in New York and the uniformed pair made loose promises to swap work (sadly, this exchange never happened). Hütter was reportedly most impressed by the Jackson clones the pop star used as decoys, calling them "very Kraftwerkian."



OKAY, SO WHICH BAND FIRST USED AN UMLAUT IN THEIR NAME?

FELIX CLAYPOOLE, BOZEMAN, MT

The band that started the heavy metal habit of having umlaut "rockdots" in their name were not remotely metal: Amon Düül were late-'60s German avant-rockers from a Munich-based artist commune. Very radical,



The Crüe's Nikki Sixx shows where to insert cocaine.

not very rock. The first American hard-rockers to adopt umlauts were Blue Öyster Cult in 1971, although it is disputed whether rock critic Richard Meltzer suggested it to producer-manager Sandy Pearlman or keyboardist Allen Lanier got there first. These additions began a rumor that the band were neo-Nazis—dispelled when they pointed out their somewhat Semitic sur-

names (Krugman, Pearlman, Bloom).

From there, names like Motörhead, Voivod and Queensrÿche followed. With Mötley Crüe, the Nazi connotations possibly were intended. Leader Nikki Sixx once tastefully admitted he wanted to create "a tour that looked like a cross between a Nazi rally and a black church service, with Mötley Crüe symbols instead of swastikas everywhere." Conversely, singer Vince Neil reckoned the umlauts were inspired by nothing more than their love of Löwenbräu beer.

IS THE SIMON AND GARFUNKEL SONG "THE BOXER" ABOUT BOB DYLAN?

PRIYADARNISHI SELVA, PHILADELPHIA

This was a good rumor: Apparently, the battered boxer's tale in the 1969 classic closely matched the punch-drunk travails of late-'60s Dylan. In Greenwich Village, the hungry youth was often compared to a boxer. The "lie la lie" refrain was supposedly a dig at how Dylan had covered up his middle-class, Zimmerman identity. And "the whores on Seventh Avenue"? A reference to the HQ of his record label Columbia, of course.

The only problem: It's all nonsense. The song's writer, Paul Simon, has often admitted the song was unintentionally autobiographical. "When we recorded it, someone said to me, 'Hey, that's a song about you.' And I said, 'No, it's not about me; it's about this guy who ...' and as I'm saying it, I thought, Hey, what am I saying? This song is about me ... One thing is certain, I've never written anything about Dylan, and I don't know of his personal life."

Intriguingly, Dylan himself covered the song on his famously lame 1970 album *Self Portrait*.

I HEARD DAVID SOUL FROM STARSKY & HUTCH WAS ONCE A SINGER WHO ALWAYS WORE A SKI MASK. WHAT GIVES?

MARK ESPOSITO, NEWARK, NJ

It's strange, but true. Trying to make it as a folk singer in the mid-'60s, David Soul (born David Richard Solberg) was struggling to get ahead. Then he had the interesting idea of sending out masked promo pics billing himself as the mysterious "Covered Man." Suddenly he became a cause célèbre, appearing on talk and variety shows—most frequently on *The Merv Griffin Show*. The only downside was that, when he finally revealed his identity, everyone lost interest. He soon ditched the singing career for acting and only returned to the mic—face fully visible—after becoming half of the most famous buddy cop duo ever.

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Dear Superstar

YOU SEND QUESTIONS, WE GET ANSWERS. WHO LOVES YA, BABY?

FOX

JAMIE



WHAT DOES JAMIE FOXX HAVE THAT BRUCE WILLIS AND KEANU REEVES DON'T? AN OSCAR ... AND A CREDIBLE MUSIC CAREER. SO WHEN HE SAYS HE HAS DESIGNS ON THE WHITE HOUSE, WE'RE INCLINED TO BELIEVE HIM

BY CLARK COLLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS BUCK

JAMIE FOXX SPENT this morning shooting at people.

"Yeah, I was shooting guns, falling and yelling, 'Go on without me!'" deadpans the 37-year-old, who is currently playing Detective Ricardo Tubbs to Colin Farrell's James "Sonny" Crockett in a movie version of *Miami Vice*. "Just the regular thing."

So much for the day job. Tonight, however, at a Miami recording studio, the actor-comedian is keen to talk about his other career—or rather, his other *other* career—as a singer. The Texan originally moved to L.A. to become "the next Lionel Richie" but found greater success on the small screen (*In Living Color*, *The Jamie Foxx Show*) and then the big (*Ali*, *Collateral*) than he did with his 1994 album, *Peep This*.

But he is currently at work on a brand-new, as yet untitled release after a series of music-oriented triumphs that include his Oscar-rewarded acting-and-singing turn in *Ray*, a performance at the 2004 Grammy party held by Clive Davis (who subsequently signed him to J Records) and his contribution to Twista's Kanye West-produced 2004 hit "Slow Jamz."

"Kanye came to a party at my house" recalls Foxx, as if it were an everyday event. "He asked if I would like to sing on a hook. We recorded it, I went off to do a movie, and when I came back it was No. 1."

Despite his grueling schedule, Foxx is charm itself, as befits his party- and female-friendly reputation. He is also prepared to answer questions about anything, from the incident last year in which a workman claimed to have found raunchy pictures of Foxx and a lady friend to the time his neighbors complained about the naked basketball game that was being held in his backyard.

"Coming from the comic world, the best thing I have in my favor is that I can talk about anything and defuse it," he explains. "As long as I'm honest, I'm gonna be cool." →



Jamie Foxx: comedian,
actor, singer, cat
whisperer ...



As Wanda on *In Living Color*: Still hotter than Mo'Nique.



Waiting on Puffy and Chris Rock during leaner days.



Eddie Murphy picks up another transvestite.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE FEMALE BODY?

VMD222, WARREN, NJ

Ass. The ass. The badonkadonk. The bump-ums. The show bumps. The fluff-ums. All of that. Long as you got a bump, know what I'm saying? Sometimes I go out with a girl, she may not look that good. Guys'll be like, why? Then they look behind her. Oh ... because of the ass!

HAS PHILIP MICHAEL THOMAS—THE ORIGINAL TUBBS—CALLED TO SAY, HEY, THAT'S MY ROLE, BITCH!

HOFSETTLER, GARRISON, NY

No he hasn't. We're waiting, though. Philip—if you're out there, hit me!

WHO'S BEEN GETTING MORE SCREAMS FROM THE LADIES—YOU OR COLIN FARRELL?

CHICAGOVICE, LEE, MA

Colin Farrell. That's his thing: the good looks, the Irish charm ... I'm always the Ed

"HOPEFULLY, ONE DAY I'LL BE PRESIDENT AND I'LL RIGHT SOME OF BUSH'S WRONGS."

McMahon, never the Johnny Carson. But he's a great guy. He's got the right idea of what it should be about: Make movies, have fun, enjoy life.

WHAT DID YOU THINK WHEN YOU SAW YOUR COLLATERAL CO-STAR TOM CRUISE JUMPING UP AND DOWN ON OPRAH'S SOFA?

STEPH222, BOSTON

I thought Katie Holmes was rocking his world. You have to know who Tom Cruise is. He's a hundred percent. There's not an evil, calculating bone in his body. When he talks about love or when he's excited about something, that's what he's like. When he talked about the ladies that he dated, he really fell for them. He always said, Foxx, I'm not a guy that likes to be with a lot of girls, I like to be in a relationship. He said, I dig showing them things and being their knight in shining armor.

YOU OWN A HOUSE IN LAS VEGAS. ARE YOU A GAMBLING MAN?

AMDOBA, SAN JOSE, CA

No, not at all. I did when I first got there. I was trying to impress these girls, when I was gambling and losing my ass. The pit boss was like, it's not going to happen—I don't care how famous you are, you're not gonna win.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT HEROIN ADDICTION FROM PLAYING RAY CHARLES?

RAYLETTE929, GULFPORT, MS

I needed to learn about the mannerisms of a heroin user. You hear that this drug is so fantastic that it could take the place of sex, but at the same time, not a lot of people make it out alive. There were a few guys on set who had experienced heroin.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER MUSICIANS YOU'D LIKE TO PLAY ON FILM?

INSOMNIA24, HOLIDAY, FL

Oh, Marvin Gaye. His story has so many layers. That's what you need to make it work. There are so many interesting things about him other than his singing. So as a moviegoer, you'd be caught up with the story and then you'd be, like, oh, that's right, he sings too.

IF THEY HAD ANNOUNCED THAT SOMEONE ELSE HAD WON THE BEST ACTOR OSCAR, WOULD YOU HAVE SMILED OR SWORN LIKE WHEN SAMUEL L. JACKSON LOST TO MARTIN LANDAU?

STARCOMPLX, CHAPEL HILL, NC

Well, clearly, Samuel should have won. But no, not at all. Win or lose, I was only thinking good thoughts. I'd had such a blast, man. It just seemed so overwhelmingly that Ray was going to be appreciated that night.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SAW A CELEBRITY AND THOUGHT, MAN, SHE IS REALLY HOT?

DENVERHIGH, STATE COLLEGE, PA

Halle Berry, last week. Phenomenal. She walks out, she looks so great that she actually made all of us giddy. It was me, Denzel and her for the cover of *Ebony* magazine. She didn't have a dress on: pants, jacket, hair pulled back. Flawless. I ponder how beautiful she is.

WHAT WAS THE FIRST CONCERT YOU EVER ATTENDED?

APLGAL, MAMARONECK, NY

1984. Texas Stadium. Michael Jackson. The Victory tour. Incredible. The man was a god at the time.

DID YOU HAVE MUCH SUCCESS WITH THE LADIES WHEN YOU WERE A TEENAGER?

RAWKSTAR207, KENT, OH

Yes, of course. That's how I know what a woman wants. I learned that from older women. Because I used to play the piano for the church when I was 15 and I'd have women that were 21, 25, 28 teach me what they like. They'd say, you're a young guy, coming up, if you want to find a nice woman, this is what they like—pay attention! And I did.

AS A TEENAGER YOU PLAYED IN A BAND CALLED LEATHER AND LACE. WERE THEY AS BAD AS THEIR NAME?

FXLYDY612, STAFFORD, TX

We were pretty bad. We did one show and we stunk. I believe I walked off stage going, I'm out of here.

DID YOU EVER GET ANY FEEDBACK FROM PRINCE AFTER YOU IMPERSONATED HIM ON *IN LIVING COLOR*?

SINFULFANATIC, HOBOKEN, NJ

Some people in his camp were like, oh, man, he didn't like that. It was friggin' hysterical.

WHAT WAS JENNIFER LOPEZ LIKE WHEN SHE WAS AN *IN LIVING COLOR* "FLY GIRL"?

LALISA, ITHACA, NY

Very ambitious. Very tough. People shit on her a lot on *In Living Color*. They were tough on her. They made fun of her, made her cut her hair. And she said I'm gonna make it. She took the bumps and bruises, and look at her now.

WHO'S THE BETTER STRAIGHT ACTOR—YOU OR JIM CARREY?

CALCYTRET, MORRISON, CO

I think Jim Carrey. Jim Carrey's great, man. I learned from him. I've got the Oscar—that is true. But you gotta kill that Oscar beast every day. I do. I put it in the corners of my mind and leave it there. Because if you walk out with that attitude, you'll start to stink real fast.



Wooing Halle Berry with an aria from *La Bohème*.

HAVE YOU LEARNED TO KEEP YOUR PRIVATE PHOTOGRAPHS UNDER LOCK AND KEY AFTER WHAT HAPPENED LAST YEAR?

BKLYNOWN72, UPPER DARBY, PA

Uh, yeah. But you know, I'll say it again: Whatever! I don't have anything to hide. I wasn't with any animals. I wasn't with any dudes. And [points down to crotch] it looks all right, you know what I'm saying?

WHAT'S THE SECRET TO THROWING A REALLY GOOD PARTY?

YANKEES3136, SPENCER, IA

Pay attention to what people want. Never run out of food. Never run out of drinks. And the music has to move the party. Early on, when they're walking in, it's like foreplay. Then, you've got to be really making love to that music in between 12:30 and 3:00—it's got to be crazy. Then the DJ has to wind it down with some nostalgia, some records maybe 10, 20 years back. Also, you need less chicken-heads and more women.

WHAT'S THE COOLEST THING YOU OWN?

JSIMPSONFAN, GRAND FORKS, ND

A Lamborghini Gallardo. People just stare at it like it's a spaceship.

DO YOU FEEL MUCH TEXAS PRIDE TOWARDS GEORGE W.?

ANNIE725, CHAMPAIGN, IL

No. Not everybody in Texas is like that, you know. Hopefully, one day I'll be president of the United States and I can right some of the wrongs. I think there are certain wars that need to be fought. And then there are wars that are just being fought.

WHAT WAS THE LAST PHYSICAL FIGHT YOU WERE IN—AND DID YOU WIN?

VANILLATIME, POMONA, CA

The last fight I had was in a club in L.A. This guy walks up to me, says, "Hey, Jamie, what's up, man?" I say, "Chillin'." Then he grabs my breast. I don't know what he was thinking. We got at it. It was quick—and I didn't even get hit once.



Crockett and Tubbs: "Don't worry, this jacket will never go out of style!"

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE OF ALL TIME?

CRUNKNATL, DECATUR, GA

New Jack City. Wesley Snipes changed our whole vernacular. "See you—wouldn't want to be you." "Cancel this bitch. I'll buy a new one." For black culture, it was one of those must-haves.

WHAT KIND OF DRUNK ARE YOU?

BRENDANTEMP, ESTERO, FL

Happy-till-I-cry. Ha! I'll be partying, kicking it off. Suddenly my sister will go, "Uh-oh, he's doing it again." [Pretends to burst into tears.] Especially if my ex-girlfriend is in the room.

ARE THERE GOING TO BE ANY MORE NAKED BASKETBALL TOURNAMENTS AT YOUR PLACE? AND, IF SO, CAN I COME?

IMAO, EDISON, NJ

Sure you can come! No jerseys allowed. It's skins and skins.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW ON THE WHOLE DAVE CHAPPELLE SAGA?

FALLOUTGIRL, ASHEVILLE, NC

The one thing I can say is, never tell anybody how much money you're earning. Ever! Always look like you might not be able to pay your tab in a bar. Always do this: [fumbles in pocket] Man, how much is it? What the fuck?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF EDDIE MURPHY'S 1985 HIT SONG, "PARTY ALL THE TIME?"

PITTSFIELDMAN, LOWELL, MA

I have it on my computer! That's a great song to play at a party—you'd be surprised. I'm an Eddie Murphy fan, period. I'm getting a chance to work with him on *Dreamgirls* [a 'Gos-set film that will also star Beyoncé]. Think about him and Rick James—man, the parties that were going on at that time!

WHEN DID YOU LAST BOMB ONSTAGE?

BBOYS, SALEM, VA

I was 21, 22, opening for Latimore, this old blues player. The crowd was 45 and up. I saw a dude with a butterfly collar and went, "Look at this dude with the collar" ... That's when I realized everybody had butterfly collars.

HAVE YOU HAD TO PAY FOR A CAB RIDE SINCE COLLATERAL?

EDIE4TEEN, BELLINGHAM, WA

Yeah, right. They're giving me free cab rides in New York. Hell, no! [BLENDER]



Jamie never did find the secret restroom.

The Greatest Songs Ever

BLENDER EXPLORES THE FINEST TUNES IN HISTORY

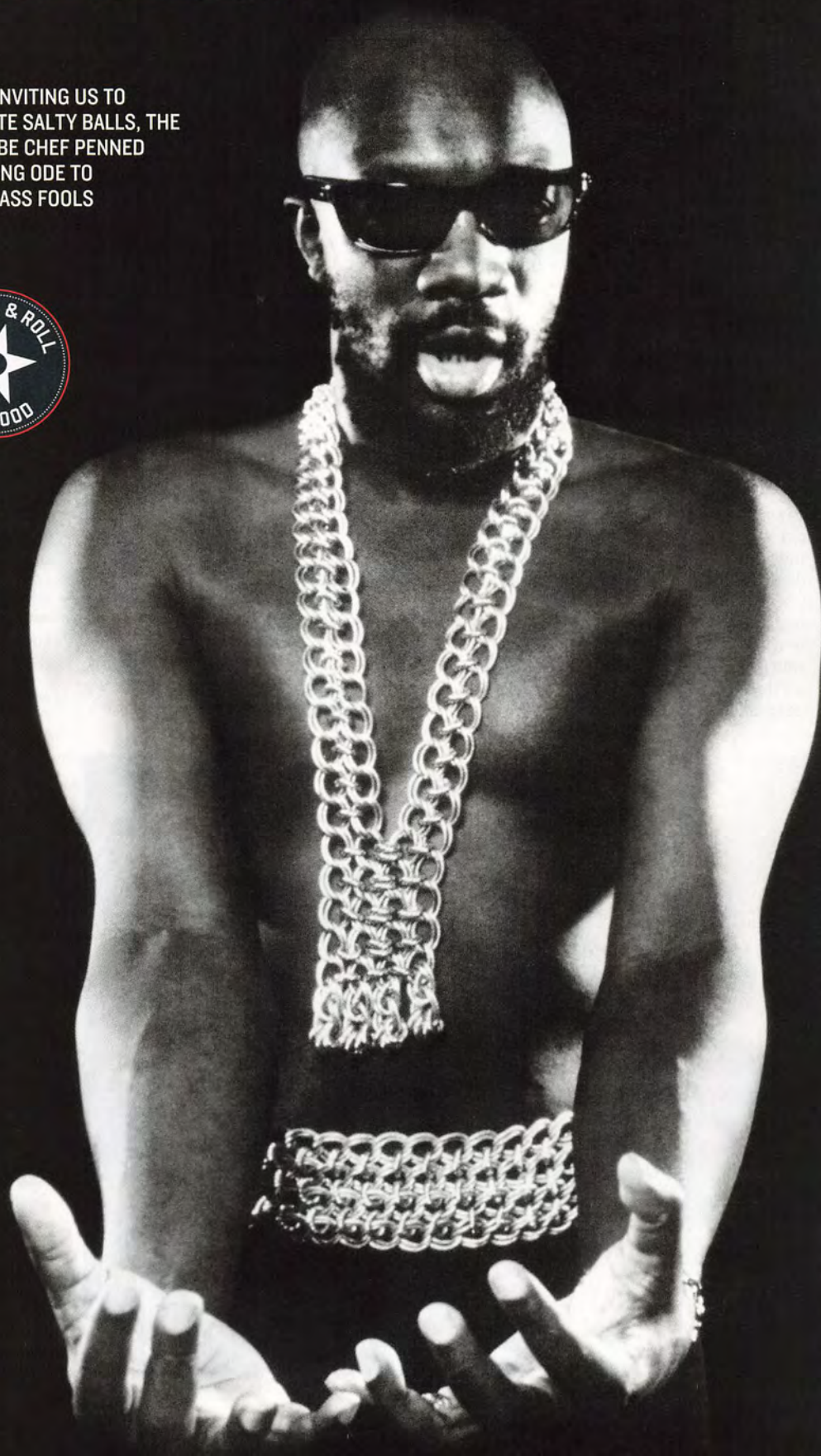
DECADES BEFORE INVITING US TO
LICK HIS CHOCOLATE SALTY BALLS, THE
MAN WHO WOULD BE CHEF PENNED
THIS OSCAR-WINNING ODE TO
SMACKING SUCKA-ASS FOOLS

BY DOUGLAS WOLK



ISAAC HAYES

THE
"THEME FROM"





IF THERE'S A moment that defines early-'70s soul, it's the climax of Wattstax, the all-day concert that the Memphis soul label Stax staged in L.A. in 1972: bald, mighty-looking Isaac Hayes tearing off a gigantic cape to reveal a vest made of gold chains and bursting into his hit "Theme from *Shaft*." But the 100,000 fans in attendance didn't know that Hayes had actually been aiming higher when he penned the song. He didn't just want to score *Shaft*—he wanted to star in it.

Hayes had started working for Stax in the mid-'60s as a session musician, playing in Otis Redding's band. Before long, he'd become a major songwriter (co-writing "Soul Man" for Sam and Dave and "B-A-B-Y" for Carla Thomas), and his second solo album, 1969's *Hot Buttered Soul*, had been a surprise hit.

When MGM first approached Hayes about scoring Gordon Parks's forthcoming 1971 action flick *Shaft*, he was excited to be involved—it was the first major studio film ever made with a black director, editor, leading man and composer. "I wanted to do the lead role, man!" Hayes recalls. "That would have been a big break! I asked them, 'Hey, have you guys cast this yet?' 'No, we haven't cast the lead role.' 'Well, I'd like to try out for that.' 'Okay.'"

"So I went back to Memphis, and I was telling people, 'I'm gonna do this movie called *Shaft*, man! I'm gonna try out for the lead role!' I was back home for a week, and they hadn't called, so I called them. 'Oh, nobody told you? They already cast a guy by the name of Richard Roundtree. And I think they've started doing the principal photography.' I felt so dejected.

"And they said, 'Oh—you're the guy who's doing the music!' I said, 'Yeah, I'll do the music ...'"

Given four days to record on the soundstage, Hayes assembled a backing band including several members of the Bar-Kays—bassist James Alexander, guitarist Michael Toles and drummer Willie Hall—who'd had some instrumental hits of their own. At an earlier studio session, Hayes and guitarist Charles "Skip" Pitts had come up with a chattering guitar riff for an unfinished song. For "Theme from *Shaft*," Hayes suggested that Pitts try to play that guitar part again, this time with a wah-wah effect. "I got on my knees and worked the wah-wah pedal with my hands, and he just went off on it," Hayes says.

It sounded so good that Hayes had Toles play the song's chords through a wah-wah

effects pedal too. And Hall's distinctive drum part—skittering sixteenth notes played on the hi-hat cymbal—was a trick that Hayes had devised a few years earlier, when he'd arranged Al Jackson's drums for Otis Redding's "Try a Little Tenderness." Hayes and the band finished the basic track the first day, a full hour and 10 minutes ahead of schedule.

The theme wasn't done yet, though. "The second day, we did the horns and strings. The third day, I had to do the vocals—and I was writing some of the lyrics in the parking lot, in the limousine. But I got it done. That famous line, 'He's a bad mother'—I censored myself, because I could've said 'bad motherfucker.' So instead I had the backup singers say 'Shut your mouth!' And it worked!" The girls who reprimanded Hayes were two members of his usual backup trio, Hot, Buttered & Soul, plus Telma Hopkins, who'd sung on another No. 1 hit at the end of 1970, Dawn's "Knock Three Times."

When *Shaft* opened, Hayes and his band were in St. Louis on tour, and they had a shut-your-mouth moment of their own in the theater. "We were cracking up—we knew the movie better than anybody, because we'd watched it so many times,

and the usher came and shushed us."

"Theme from *Shaft*" wasn't released as a single at first, because it didn't sound like one—its arrangement keeps shifting, Hayes's voice doesn't appear for almost two minutes, and he sings only a couple of lines. "We had no idea," Hayes says. "This was the first time I'd ever undertaken a movie score. We were sweating bullets. I was just pleased that the producer and director didn't have my head on a platter."

But *Shaft* had become a box-office monolith and New York club DJs like Bobby Guttadaro were spinning the theme song, so two months after the release of the soundtrack LP, an edited version was released as a 45 single. A month later, it was on the charts; five weeks after that, it was No. 1.

By Christmas, the Bar-Kays had a Top Ten R&B hit of their own with the sound-alike "Son of *Shaft*," and people were murmuring about the Oscars. "The old guard in Hollywood, those guys rejected it—'Isaac Hayes? He's not qualified to be nominated—he didn't even write the thing.' Well, I did write it! I dictated the music to people who could put it on paper. But I wrote it; it all came out of my head."

Hayes flew his 80-year-old grandmother to Los Angeles for the Academy Awards ceremony, where he performed "Theme from *Shaft*" in his chain vest. Then, proving the haters wrong, he changed backstage into a tuxedo (with powder-blue mink cuffs and a blue rose in lieu of a bowtie) to accept his Oscar for Best Song.

For the next few years, every blaxploitation movie had a soundtrack modeled on Hayes's music for *Shaft*, and the theme's signature wah-wah effect showed up everywhere in funk. Marching bands turned "Theme from *Shaft*" into a standard. Willie Hall's rat-a-tat cymbal part, meanwhile, became the foundation for a little genre called disco.

And Hayes realized that audiences associated the song with him more than with the movie. "When we played '*Shaft*' live, man, that was it. We saved it for the last tune of every concert. We still do that today." Hayes re-recorded the song for the 2000 remake of *Shaft*, with Samuel L. Jackson in the title role.

When most people think of *Shaft*, they don't think of Sam Jackson or Richard Roundtree, but of Isaac Hayes intoning, "Who's the black private dick who's a sex machine to all the chicks?" Which means he got to be the star after all. [BLEND] **77**

	VITAL STATISTICS SONG: "Theme from <i>Shaft</i> " ARTIST: Isaac Hayes PERFORMERS: Isaac Hayes, vocals, keyboards Lester Snell, electric piano James Alexander, bass Charles "Skip" Pitts, guitar Michael Toles, guitar Willie Hall, drums Gary Jones, congas Pat Lewis, Rose Williams, Telma Hopkins, vocals LABEL: Enterprise PRODUCER: Isaac Hayes CHART DEBUT: October 1971 HIGHEST CHART POSITION: 1 (Pop); 2 (R&B)
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	[WHO'S WHO] ISAAC HAYES Singer, songwriter, producer, arranger, future Chef and all-around bad mother—(shut your mouth!). CHARLES "SKIP" PITTS The guitarist with a wah-wah trick who's a sex machine to all the chicks. WILLIE HALL The drummer that won't cop out when there's proto-disco all about.
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ROCK & ROLL KNOW-IT-ALL

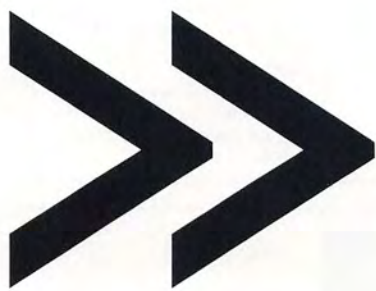
HOOK-UPS

FAME. RICHES. MEGALOMANIA. **MUSICIANS AND MOVIE STARS** HAVE SO MUCH IN COMMON, IS IT ANY WONDER THEY FREQUENTLY END UP SHARING MORE THAN JUST RED CARPETS? *BLENDER* PRESENTS A HISTORY OF INTER-INDUSTRY SPIT-SWAPPING

BY CLARK COLLIS



Tommy & Pam:
"Yeah, go get the
video camera—what
harm can it do?"



1949

Screen siren and exhibitionist **TALLULAH BANKHEAD** insists that blues legend **BILLIE HOLIDAY** keep her dressing room door open while they have sex, almost getting the singer fired in the process.

1951

Actress **AVA GARDNER** marries vox populi **FRANK SINATRA**, later explaining, "There's only 10 pounds of Frank—but there's 110 pounds of cock." After just a couple of years they separate and Sinatra embarks on an affair with then-only-15-years-old film star Natalie Wood.



1955

Singer **EDDIE FISHER** and actress **DEBBIE REYNOLDS** get married despite Reynolds's friend, Frank Sinatra, warning that the union is destined for disaster. In 2002 Reynolds will recall, "He said, 'You should never marry a singer. We're unreliable.'"

1959

EDDIE FISHER deserts **DEBBIE REYNOLDS** for **ELIZABETH TAYLOR**. Remarkably, Taylor and Reynolds will eventually work together on a film—2001's *These Old Broads*—the latter commenting, "You say bygones be bygones, especially if the man you married proves to be a complete idiot."



1963

The on-set chemistry between **ELVIS PRESLEY** and his *Viva Las Vegas!* co-star **ANN-MARGARET** inspires rumors—never confirmed or denied—of an affair. Presley later dates Cybill Shepherd, who will subsequently say of the Burger King, "The last time I saw him in Las Vegas, he gave me an emerald ring in one hand and sleeping pills in the other. I returned both."

1965

Rolling Stone **BRIAN JONES** meets future *Barbarella* star **ANITA PALLENBERG** while playing a show in Munich. According to Pallenberg, "Brian was tearful that night because Mick and Keith had teamed up on him, and I really felt sorry for him." They become an item, despite the acid-damaged Jones's habit of punching Pallenberg in the face.



1966

FRANK SINATRA weds petite actress **MIA FARROW**, prompting ex-wife Ava Gardner to sneer "I always knew Frank would end up in bed with a little boy." The pair divorce two years later. When Farrow later discovers boyfriend Woody Allen has been taking nude photographs of her adopted daughter Soon-Yi, Sinatra offers to have his legs broken.



1967

BRIAN JONES, ANITA PALLEMBERG and **KEITH RICHARDS** take a road trip to Morocco. But after just one day, Jones is hospitalized with blood in his lungs. Pallenberg and Richards carry on and are soon having sex in their chauffeur-driven car. "A lot can go on in the back-seat of a Bentley," Richards will later explain. "Shit happens, man."

1968

More shit happens during the filming of British art-gangster movie *Performance* when Pallenberg sleeps with her co-star, and Richards's bandmate, **MICK JAGGER**. In a not unconnected decision, Richards declines to write any music for the film's soundtrack.

1970

Narcotically troubled actor-director-nutcase **DENNIS HOPPER** marries **MICHELLE PHILLIPS** and, the Mamas and the Papas singer claims, keeps her in handcuffs, believing she is a witch. Hopper will deny the accusation—claiming "she had the handcuffs"—but regardless, the marriage lasts a mere eight days.

1972

SAMMY DAVIS JR. meets **LINDA LOVELACE**, star of oral-sex-oriented porn movie *Deep Throat*. Despite both being married, they begin a (semi) affair. "(Sammy) had his own code of marital fidelity," Lovelace later wrote in her autobiography. "What he wanted me to do was to deep-throat him. Because that would not be an act of infidelity."

1972

CARLY SIMON releases "You're So Vain," a song widely believed to be about either **MICK JAGGER**, who supplies backing vocals, or **Bonnie and Clyde** star and all-around cocksman **WARREN BEATTY**. Years later, when Simon is asked if she actually went out with Beatty, the singer will reply, "Hasn't everybody?"



Sean Penn and Madonna, shortly before beating this photographer to death.

1985

When **MADONNA** appears on the cover of *Time* magazine, she phones beau **SEAN PENN**, telling him "You get over here now. How many girlfriends have you had on the cover of *Time*? One! Me!" The pair marry soon afterwards, the presence of paparazzi-bearing helicopters inspiring a pissed-off Penn to greet guests with the words "Welcome to the remaking of *Apocalypse Now*."

1985

Mötley Crüe drummer **TOMMY LEE** is introduced to **HEATHER LOCKLEAR** at an REO Speedwagon show. The next week, Lee calls the *Dynasty* dynamo and instantly confuses her with *Fall Guy* actress Heather Thomas. According to Lee, "I made a million mistakes with her—and she still fucking went out with me!"

1984

At the Playboy Mansion, Kiss bassist **GENE SIMMONS** meets **SHANNON TWEED**, pneumatic future star of *Body Chemistry 4: Full Exposure* and *Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death*. "After meeting Shannon," the God of Thunder will later recall, "I lost interest in the other new friends I made that night, including Miss February." The couple have two children.



1985

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, the Woody Guthrie of his generation, marries **JULIANNE PHILLIPS**, the future star of *Fletch Lives*. The pair separate in 1988 after Springsteen falls for singer Patti Scialfa.



1986

TOMMY LEE and **HEATHER LOCKLEAR** marry at a ceremony mostly memorable for the fact that junkie best man, Crüe bassist Nikki Sixx, repeatedly nods off in front of the 500 assembled guests.

1989

In January, **SEAN PENN** and **MADONNA** divorce. The following month the singer starts filming *Dick Tracy* with leather-faced lothario **WARREN BEATTY**. The pair become an item, with Beatty asserting, "She makes me young." Not young enough, however; Madonna is soon suggesting that the 21-years-older actor get liposuction.



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1976

ROD STEWART gets into the panties of Bond girl **BRITT EKLAND**—literally. “One day I wore Britt’s [underwear] and told someone,” he later says. “And it’s lived with me ever since.” In 1977 the pair split. The singer’s then-publicist subsequently says of the infamously tight-with-money Stewart, “Britt was naïve—Rod Stewart is faithful to no one, except his bank manager maybe.”



1982

DON HENLEY releases solo album *I Can't Stand Still*, which is not only dedicated to his girlfriend, *Battlestar Galactica* actress **MAREN JENSEN**, but also features her on backing vocals. Meanwhile, Toto release “Rosanna,” a tribute to actress **ROSANNA ARQUETTE**, who is dating the band’s **STEVE PORCARO**.

1981

EDDIE VAN HALEN marries **VALERIE BERTINELLI**, star of TV sitcom *One Day at a Time*. The actress sticks with Eddie through his alcoholism, cancer and decision to replace Extreme’s Gary Charone as Van Halen’s frontman, but the couple finally split in 2001.

1980

Proving that even utterly diabolical prehistoric comedies have a silver lining, ex-Beatle **RINGO STARR** falls in love with Bond girl **BARBARA BACH** on the set of the otherwise lamentable *Caveman*. They marry, and Starr’s 2005 CD *Choose Love* will contain a song about their still-ongoing relationship titled “Me and You.” Awww ...

1980

Heartthrob singer **ANDY GIBB** starts dating one-time Frank Sinatra paramour and *Dallas* soapstress **VICTORIA PRINCIPAL**. They release a cover of the Everly Brothers’ “All I Have to Do Is Dream” but soon break up, and Gibb completely falls apart, becoming a \$1,000-a-day cocaine addict.

1978

CARRIE FISHER, the daughter of Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher, begins a relationship with singer-songwriter **PAUL SIMON**, former boyfriend of Shelley “Olive Oyl” Duvall and Fisher’s senior by 15 years. They marry in August 1983 but separate the following April. Fisher later commented, “I figured out what he needed was an intellectual geisha.”



1992

PETER GABRIEL releases *Us*, an album partly inspired by his former relationship with **ROSANNA ARQUETTE**. In turn, the actress declares that Gabriel’s “nice-guy act is a front, and he is manipulative. I truly got nothing out of the relationship at all ... nothing. I just gave and really got taken.” The actress subsequently dates Blue Nile singer Paul Buchanan.

1993

TOMMY LEE and **HEATHER LOCKLEAR** split. The breakdown of their relationship is due partly to Locklear’s refusal to have children and partly to her discovery that Lee had attended a Ron Jeremy porn shoot where an adult-film actress, according to the drummer, “sucks the fuck” out of his penis.

1993

Screen beauty **JULIA ROBERTS** marries country singer **LYLE LOVETT**, a man who is described by one unkind columnist as “a contender in any Ugly Man Contest.” The marriage lasts just long enough for Roberts to sing on Lovett’s album *I Love Everybody*.





1994

On New Year's Eve, **TOMMY LEE** meets **PAMELA ANDERSON** at a nightclub. Lee, who is on Ecstasy, introduces himself by licking the *Baywatch* star's face. Despite being in a relationship with *Last Action Hero* actress **BOBBIE BROWN**, the drummer follows Anderson to Cancun, where the pair make "golden love" and marry on the beach.

1998

MADONNA develops a crush on *Snatch* director **GUY RICHIE** after meeting him at the house of fellow Hollywood-rock couple Sting and Trudie Styler. The pair make a movie, the maligned *Swept Away*, and, more successfully, a son, Rocco. In 2000 they marry at Skibo Castle, Scotland.

1998

Internet Entertainment Group commercially releases a stolen home video featuring **TOMMY LEE** and **PAMELA ANDERSON** having sex. The same year, Lee serves four months behind bars for assaulting his wife. After his release, Lee dates Anderson's fellow TV lifeguard **CARMEN ELECTRA**.

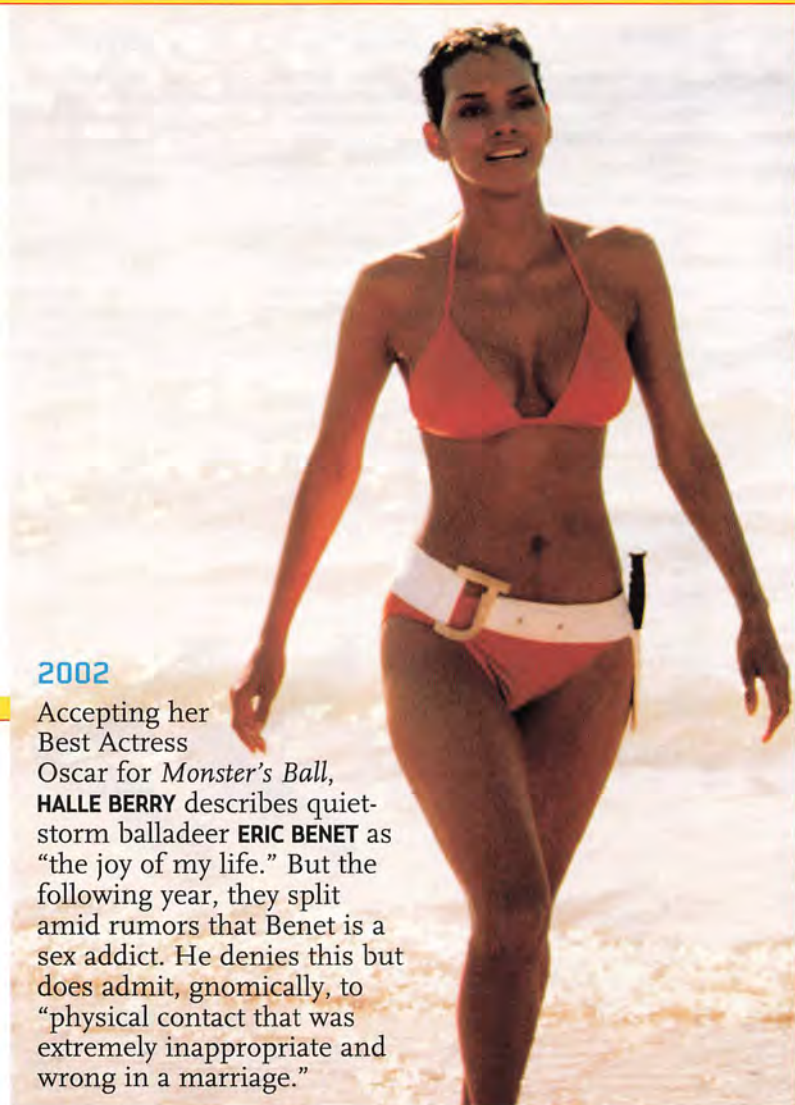


1998

LIV TYLER starts stepping out with Spacehog's **ROYSTON LANGDON**, ushering in a golden age of actress-rock star couples that includes **KATE HUDSON** and **CHRIS ROBINSON**, **CAMERON DIAZ** and **JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE**, **DREW BARRYMORE** and **FABRIZIO MORETTI**, and **GWYNETH PALTROW** and **CHRIS MARTIN**. At press time, all are still together.

1999

Beastie Boy **ADAM HOROVITZ** divorces from actress **IONE SKYE**, while bandmate **MIKE DIAMOND**'s marriage to *Half Baked* director **TAMRA DAVIS** will prove to be longer-lasting, the couple having two sons, the second in 2004.



2002

Accepting her Best Actress Oscar for *Monster's Ball*, **HALLE BERRY** describes quiet-storm balladeer **ERIC BENET** as "the joy of my life." But the following year, they split amid rumors that Benet is a sex addict. He denies this but does admit, gnomically, to "physical contact that was extremely inappropriate and wrong in a marriage."



2002

When footage is released of serial musician-dater **WINONA RYDER** shoplifting clothes, *The Daily Show*'s Jon Stewart jokes that "Ryder's ex-boyfriends **JOHNNY DEPP**, **CHRISTIAN SLATER**, **DANIEL DAY-LEWIS**, **DAVE PIRNER**, **DAVID DUCHOVNY**, **MATT DAMON**, **CHRIS NOTH**, **BECK**, **EVAN DANDO**, **JAMIROQUAI**, **PAUL WESTERBERG**, **JIMMY FALLON**, **JACK WHITE**, **PETE YORN**, **RYAN ADAMS** and every member of **WILCO** could not be reached for comment."



2003

It is enthusiastically, but incorrectly, reported by the press that **NICOLE KIDMAN** is to marry boyfriend and retro-rocker **LENNY KRAVITZ**, former husband of *The Cosby Show*'s **LISA BONET**.

Patsy Kensit's *Hamlet* audition was memorable but unsuccessful.



2000

Lethal Weapon 2 actress **PATSY KENSIT** divorces from Oasis frontman **LIAM GALLAGHER** who, she discovers, impregnated another woman just weeks into their marriage. Asked in 2005 if she intended to wed again, the actress (who had previously been married to Big Audio Dynamite's **DAN DONOVAN** and **JIM KERR** from Simple Minds) replied, "I think I've exhausted the matrimonial sphere."

2001

ROSE MCGOWAN's dreams of becoming Mrs. God of Fuck come to an end with the announcement that she and fiancé **MARILYN MANSON** have split. "I collect Depression-era Moderne," the *Charmed* actress explains. "It doesn't work well with devil's heads."



2001

KID ROCK releases the CD *Cocky*, whose lyrics note that he has "a pocket full of phone numbers/From **PAM ANDERSON** to Suzanne Somers." The rap-rock, who on the CD also declares his love for "big, cornfed Midwestern ho's," is dating the *Baywatch* star despite the fact that big, cornfed Anderson actually hails from Canada.



2004

Kill Bill actress **VIVICA A. FOX** tells an interviewer that the 12-year age difference between herself and new beau **50 CENT** is not a problem: "[He says] look at you, you look 28, girl, damn." They break up not long after, the rapper asserting that Fox's publicists were using the relationship to boost their client's profile.

VH1's *The Surreal Life* more than justifies its name by playing cupid to diminutive, time-obsessed Public Enemy spark plug **FLAVOR FLAV** and *Rocky IV* giantess **BRIGITTE NIELSEN**. Their possibly-just-for-publicity romance is examined further in the series *Strange Love*, whose theme song explains, "He's a jester/She's a fox/She likes smoking/He likes clocks."



2004

GWYNETH PALTROW and **CHRIS MARTIN** delight their respective fans by having a child together—and then bewilder everyone by naming her Apple.

2004

Boo! The White Stripes' **JACK WHITE** splits from *Chicago* actress **RENÉE ZELLWEGER**. But—yay!—both marry the following year, the former to a model in a canoe, the latter to country hunk **KENNY CHESNEY** in the Caribbean.



2005

On a double date with *Blender* magazine, choogie-rock greaser **SHOOTER JENNINGS** says of his girlfriend, *Sopranos* actress **DREA DE MATTEO**, "I would drag my balls over 10 miles of broken glass to hear [her] piss in a tin cup over a telephone." Who says romance is dead? [BLENDER]

My Music

OUR FAVORITE STARS' FAVORITE RECORDS



"THIS IS HOW WE SHOULD

REMEMBER MIKE."

NICK CANNON, STAR OF *UNDERCLASSMAN* AND MTV'S *WILD 'N' OUT*, SHOWS OFF HIS RECORD COLLECTION AND REVEALS HE WAS CORRUPTED AT A YOUNG AGE BY—WHO ELSE?—R. KELLY AND MICHAEL JACKSON!

BY VICTORIA DE SILVERIO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TURE LILLEGRAVEN

THE ALBUM THAT
SOUNDS LIKE MY
CHILDHOOD



SLICK RICK
THE GREAT
ADVENTURES OF
SLICK RICK

DEF JAM, 1988
I grew up on Slick Rick. When I was a kid, like 6 or 7 years old, his cool, laid-back chats were the first rhymes I ever learned. You know, when people used to carry the big radio at the playground or on the corner, I remember just hearing it playing out of a boombox. Everywhere. And you were instantly cool if you knew the words to "La Di Da Di" or if you could spit the whole verse of "Children's Story." You gotta do it like Slick.

THE ALBUM THAT
SOUNDS LIKE MY
ADULTHOOD



KANYE WEST
THE COLLEGE
DROPOUT

ROC-A-FELLA, 2004
Kanye's a good friend of mine and I know how hard he works and how much he put into this. It depicts the life of a young black male who's not necessarily a thug or a gangster or a pimp. Just a regular dude who likes to have fun, and I can relate to that—*The College Dropout* is the underdog record, it's very unorthodox. But it's also the most perfect of albums. He has the comedic element, the swagger and obviously he has the hot tracks.

THE ALBUM
I LOST MY
VIRGINITY TO



R. KELLY
12 PLAY
JIVE, 1993

Now that's the freaky album. I was just getting into girls, and doing more than kissing behind the lockers. On "Homie Lover Friend" he just breaks it down! It was the perfect sex manual for teenagers. So I had my first sexual experience to *12 Play*. It was at a slumber party, a get-in-my-sleeping-bag type of thing. Just wham bam, thank you, ma'am. I cried afterwards. Not tears of bliss. It was just, "Oh my god! What am I doing?" Because my pops was a minister.

THE ALBUM THAT'S
THE EPITOME OF
COOL



THE TIME
WHAT TIME IS IT?
WARNER BROS., 1982

My favorite band. The first dance I knew how to do was from "Gigolo Get Lonely Too." Everybody—especially girls—likes Prince, but I like Morris Day. I can quote all his lines from *Purple Rain*. Every guy wanted to be as cool as Morris Day—he was a funny cat. Their live shows put it all together: choreography, acting, music. The whole guy-with-the-mirror thing, that was very theatrical. I think we need to bring that back. He and I can remake "Gigolo"—tell him to holler at me!

THE ALBUM THAT
MADE ME A
"BUGABOO"



DESTINY'S CHILD
THE WRITING'S ON
THE WALL

COLUMBIA, 1999
I'm in love with Beyoncé. When this came out, I was going to every concert, every TV show they appeared on—I could have been the "buga-boo" they were talking about. I was backstage, trying to get it cracking. They got the records for when you get intimate or when you're just chillin', they got driving music, they got club music. The slow ones are on my iPod "Freaky Jams" playlist. Where every song just makes you want to ...

THE ALBUM THAT'S
SO GOOD, IT'S
SCARY



MICHAEL JACKSON
OFF THE WALL

EPIC, 1979
If I had to give a definition of music, *Off the Wall* would be it—all the orchestration, the production, and live instruments, it will never go out of style. Even today, you go into a club, you might hear "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough" or "Rock With You" and the club goes crazy. This is how we should remember Mike. When he was just an artist with the fresh afro, the big bow tie, the big nose. They invited me a bunch of times to Neverland, but I never went.

THE ALBUM THAT
I KNEW EVERY
WORD TO



NOTORIOUS B.I.G.
LIFE AFTER DEATH

BAD BOY, 1997
The weekend Biggie was killed, before the record came out, I met him at the Soul Train awards. The first single, "Hypnotize," had just dropped, everyone on the Sunset Strip was bumping it in their cars. I love when an MC becomes greater than his music, when he's larger than life. And for him, a cat coming from the streets and making it big, his success was against all odds. He wasn't an attractive dude, but ladies loved him.

THE ALBUM THAT
MY FATHER MADE
ME LISTEN TO



FRED HAMMOND & RADICAL FOR CHRIST
PAGES OF LIFE:
CHAPTERS 1 & 2

VERITY, 1998
When I was young, I would sometimes live with my father in Montreal. Fred Hammond's amazing voice would be blaring in the car, in the house. I was only allowed to listen to gospel. When my mother, who was living in California, sent me Snoop's *Doggystyle*, my father crushed it and threw it away. I eventually learned to love and understand gospel, and now it's my favorite music.

THE ALBUM THAT
IS THE
ANTI-JIGGY



COMMON
LIKE WATER FOR
CHOCOLATE

MCA, 2000
Common became one of my favorite MCs on this record because he was talking about regular stuff that nobody else was talking about. It's spiritually grounded. At that time it was all about diamonds, bitches, ho's and Bentleys and he really wasn't on it, which was cool for me, because I was 17, and I couldn't relate to that stuff either. Common is a great storyteller and he speaks in everyday talk instead of braggadocious rhymes.

THE ALBUM THAT
WILL BE BIGGER
THAN ELVIS



TUPAC
ALL EYEZ ON ME

DEATH ROW, 1996
Tupac's the greatest MC ever. He could talk about his love for his mom and at the same time, he'd talk about the strip club and how much he hates the police. He was more than a rapper—he was a cultural icon, a poet, an activist in the community, a modern-day philosopher. I think his legacy will even be greater than Elvis. When this came out, I was in high school, and "All Eyez on Me" was my anthem. I wanted everybody to be watching me at all times. [BLENDER]



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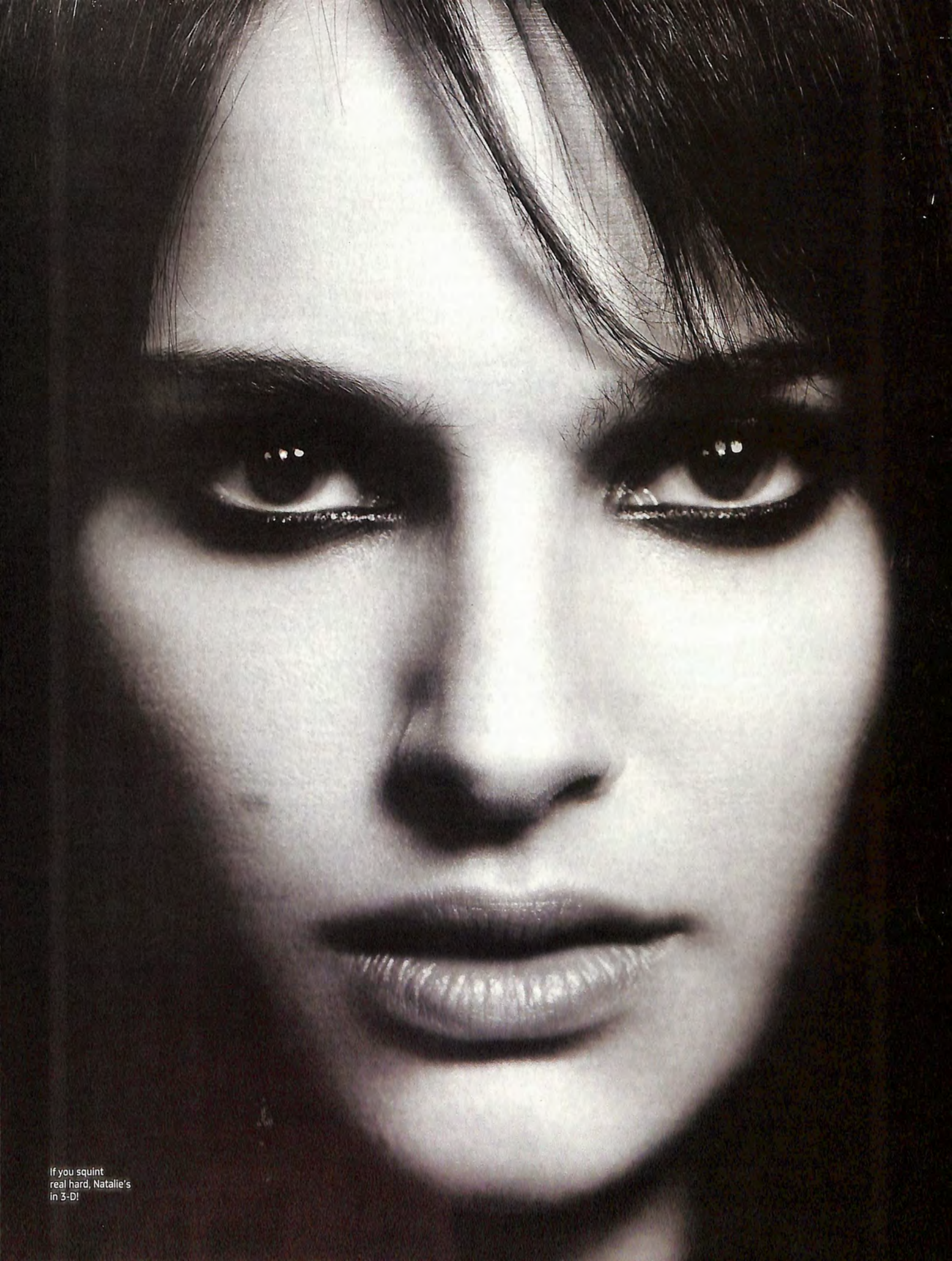
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Natalie Portman Will Change Your Life

BY ARIEL LEVY ★ PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK ABRAHAMS

SHE'S AN A-LIST INGÉNUÉ WHO'S POLITE TO STRANGERS,
GRADUATED (WITH HONORS) FROM HARVARD AND HAS NEVER
EVEN *SEEN* COCAINE. SO WHAT'S A NICE GIRL
LIKE **NATALIE PORTMAN** DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?





If you squint
real hard, Natalie's
in 3-D!

T

here are two things mentioned in every article ever written about Natalie Portman: that she is unusually little, and that because she is so little she never gets recognized in public. Only a Lilliputian would argue the first point, but just moments after *Blender* joins Portman, 24, for lunch at a crowded restaurant in Manhattan, a teenage boy with braces approaches her for an autograph. "I'm sososo sorry to bother you," he says, looking as if the intensity of meeting her is causing him physical pain. "It's for my uncle Miguel."

Portman is wearing two tank tops, a batik-ish printed skirt, no makeup and very little hair. Still, she has the power to turn guys to mush. "Here you go," she says, handing him back his piece of paper and smiling. He folds it in half and asks her to sign it again. "And one for me," he says. "Miguel."

"You're Miguel too?" she asks skeptically.

"I'm sososo sorry," Miguel says again. Then: "Can I have your e-mail address?"

Things have changed, Portman says, ever since she shaved her head for her upcoming movie *V for Vendetta*, a thriller set in a fascistic and futuristic London: Her near-skinheadedness has rendered her recognizable. It's a bald new world, and everywhere she goes, people know it's her.

"I've been growing it out for about a month now," she says, running her hand over her fuzz. "Maybe it's been longer than that ... maybe I'm lying to myself because I want to imagine that in another month it'll be like a bob."

Portman is used to blending in, and you can see how with a less conspicuous 'do that would be possible. She has perfect, delicate features and a tiny lit-

tle body that look dramatic and delicious dolled up and magnified on screen. In person, however, she looks pretty but normal. Short and brown-haired with the standard speech pattern of a peppy young person, Portman sounds and seems very down to earth, more like the spazz she played in *Garden State* than the tormented stripper of *Closer* or the grim intergalactic mini-senator of *Star Wars*. In one breath she says, "I don't think I'm gonna eat. I have five friends from Israel staying at my house—I felt like a mom this morning. I made like 10 eggs! I was like whoa, 10 eggs take a long time to cook. Sorry, I'm so, like, standard actress who's like, I'm not eating, but I really did just have a huge meal."

Of course, part of Portman's charm is exactly that she does not seem standard actress: She seems smart (she went to Harvard), she seems decent (she just used her vacation to go visit her grandma in Ohio), she seems deep (she is actively involved with FINCA, an international organization that gives loans to women in developing countries so they can start small businesses) and she seems lovely—but in a very unscary way. Miguel may have been mush, but he felt he could approach her, talk to her and ask to be on her buddy list. You think he'd try to pull that with Paris Hilton?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

NATALIE PORTMAN PRESENTS a sexuality quite a bit more understated than the *Taradise* bimbot variety, and indeed it's a seduction she's been practicing effectively on audiences since she was 12. She first became famous as the underage leading lady in *The Professional*, Luc Besson's tender story of love between a hit man and his child protégée. "It sort of got mauled for being Lolita-y," she says. "There were whole articles in *Newsweek* about how my parents should be prosecuted for letting me make the movie and how it was too sexy for a kid—literally, multiple articles! I was sort of embarrassed by all of it," even though she never felt exploited by the director or objectified in the film. "I definitely understood my sexuality," Portman says. "It was the beginning of it, obviously, but I was aware of how to flirt. Twelve-year-old girls know how to do that."

When most child actors talk about their early work experiences, there is an undertow of resentment, a sense that they were pushed, or used, or missed out on things. But Portman has always seen herself as the one in control of her life and career. She was only 10 years old when a Revlon scout spotted her at a pizza place near her home in Jericho, Long Island, and asked if she was interested in becoming a model. Portman, the only child of an Israeli fertility-doctor father and an artist mother from Ohio, said she'd rather try acting. To hear her tell it, she was always the boss—the little Amidala with big plans. "I was definitely different from the other kids," she says. "I was more ambitious, I knew what I liked and what I wanted, and I worked really hard. I was a very serious kid."

After *The Professional*, Portman vowed to stick to roles that were modest, neutered even, until she grew up. "I sort of made a point to go the opposite way: ➔



"I WAS AWARE OF HOW TO FLIRT WHEN I WAS 12."

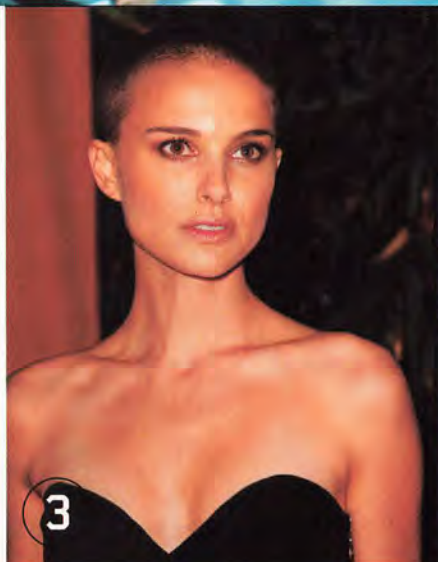
DRESS BY MARC JACOBS NECKLACE BY DEAN HARRIS



1



2



3

1 Getting wet in *Garden State*. 2 Getting freaky-looking in *The Phantom Menace*. 3 Getting classy at Cannes. 4 Getting, um, young with *Tweety Bird* in 1995. 5 Getting political at Live 8.



4



5

For 10 years, everything I did, there was no suggestion of anything sexy ... maybe a kiss." In Ted Demme's *Beautiful Girls*, she was once again a smitten youngster, pinning for a grown man (who loves her back at least a little), but it was sweet and romantic rather than erotic. She was Susan Sarandon's grumpy, precocious daughter and

You can't take your eyes off her." Braff co-starred with and directed Portman in 2004's *Garden State*, a film that showcased her goofy side and transformed her from nerd crush to indie-rock dream girl. As Braff's love interest Sam, Portman so adorably declaimed her infatuation for Albuquerque band the Shins that she

with: this free-spirited, intelligent and whimsical beauty. The kid who feels rejected by society ... she's like his fantasy."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THOUGH DIRECTORS HAVE tended to cast her in "old soul" roles, Portman insists that her parents did a bang-up job of keeping her sheltered, and that in real life she had the space to grow up at a relatively normal pace. "People have really bad experiences" as child actors, she says, "but I didn't. I had really nice people around me. I never had any crazy work hours, no one coming on to me," and her folks never skimmed the standard parental managerial fee off her earnings.

To hear Portman tell it, the only negative experience of celebrity from which her parents could not shield her was fame itself. "When I was in high school, I used to hate getting recognized," she says. "I used to lie to people. They would ask, are you Natalie Portman? And I would say no. Then they would get angry, like, you bitch, what do you think you're pulling? In a celebrity-obsessed culture, it's interest- ➔

"BEING A CELEBRITY IS LIKE BEING MICKEY MOUSE: PEOPLE WANT TO GET THEIR PICTURE TAKEN WITH YOU OR SCREAM YOUR NAME ON THE STREET."

reluctant best friend in *Anywhere but Here*, a performance that earned her a Golden Globe nomination. She was a young mother embittered and widowed by the Civil War in *Cold Mountain*. And of course, she was the wee interplanetary powerhouse Padmé Amidala in George Lucas's second round of *Star Wars* movies.

"She's captivating to watch," says actor-director Zach Braff. "She's like Audrey Hepburn or Lauren Bacall; the moment she enters the frame you have no choice.

altered the course of their career; her line claiming the Shins "will change your life" helped propel the band from modest blog faves to beloved cult stars, and even went on to fuel a website by the same name that skewered such breathlessness.

"How much would it cost to get Natalie Portman to do a commercial for you? It's priceless," says Shins frontman James Mercer. "It was so fantastic because her character in *Garden State* is the type of girl that every indie-rock boy would fall in love



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ing to be a celebrity. You get to see what and why and how people care about it." She thinks about it for a minute. "Being a celebrity ... it's basically being treated like a thing, like you're Mickey Mouse: People point and laugh and stare, they want to get their picture taken with you or scream your name on the street."

Plenty of famous people talk about their attempts to lead a "normal life," but Portman's efforts are more strenuous than most. The house she bought after graduating from college is in suburban Long Island, about a 20-minute drive from her parents. ("I'm not the biggest fan of suburbia, but if I'm only home two months a year I want to make it easy for my mom to be like, I've made lunch, come over.") She never talks about her personal life in interviews (she's been romantically linked in the press with Zach Braff, *Star Wars* co-star Hayden Christensen, *Mars Attacks!* co-star Lukas Haas and, most convincingly, with *Motorcycle Diaries* star Gael Garcia Bernal), and she's been known to show up at premieres with her grandmother, whose surname, Portman, is the one you know her

"HOW MUCH WOULD IT COST TO GET NATALIE PORTMAN TO DO A COMMERCIAL FOR YOUR BAND? IT'S PRICELESS."

SHINS FRONTMAN JAMES MERCER

by. (Her real name is Natalie Hershlag, which only makes her cuter.) She finished Harvard right on schedule, with straight A's. And she's never been one to get into trouble. "I've never seen drugs in my life," she says. "My friends are all like, what are you talking about? But I swear, I've never seen cocaine in my life—I mean, I've seen it in movies ..."

When Portman made *Closer*, Mike Nichols's 2004 film adaptation of Patrick Marber's play, there was much ado about Natalie Portman showing her dark side as a stripper and fairly intense liar in the role of Alice. (For a minute, it also seemed as if she would be showing her ta-tas, and the Internet was abuzz with glee. But when Portman saw footage of herself exposed, she felt uncomfortable and asked Nichols to cut those images from the film. That night, a thousand Miguels cried themselves to sleep.) But Portman managed to make her character both winsome and cerebral; not even a lap dance is crass when it's given by Natalie Portman.

As her co-star Clive Owen said, "Even

in one of those pink wigs in the club, she still looks like Audrey Hepburn."

Portman has already proven herself to be a great ingénue—perhaps the greatest ingénue of her generation—who brings an inherent purity to all her roles. But there is more to onscreen womanhood than purity. Cameron Crowe has said he didn't cast Portman as Penny Lane in *Almost Famous* (the role that was ultimately played by Kate Hudson) because he wanted an actress who could make "you believe she had a past." *V for Vendetta*, then, is something of an experiment: Portman as a quasi-terrorist. The film, originally slated for fall

PORTMAN'S GREATEST HITS

TWELVE YEARS. FIFTEEN MOVIES. HER FIVE MOST MEMORABLE SCENES



THE PROFESSIONAL [1994]

Doing a breathy impersonation of Marilyn Monroe so overtly sexual it makes even her icy hitman guardian squirm, this discomforting scene helped establish the 12-year-old Portman as a brilliant actress and an unwitting Lolita. (53:00)



BEAUTIFUL GIRLS [1996]

A bat mitzvah-aged Portman urges Timothy Hutton to wait the five years necessary to date her without fear of imprisonment, all while ice skating and quoting Lou Reed. Flirtatious and innocent at the same time. (1:01:00)



STAR WARS: EPISODE II—ATTACK OF THE CLONES [2002]

Visibly relieved to no longer be wearing kabuki headgear, Portman proves more able-bodied than two Jedis by battling clone androids, CGI beasts and Hayden Christensen's wooden line readings in little more than a claw-slashed unitard. (1:06:00)



GARDEN STATE [2004]

A bundle of frenetic charm on a waiting-room chair, Portman meets Zach Braff, insults him and then adorably makes amends by sharing her CD Walkman with him. The Shins get their big break, and indie-rock geeks get their new crush. (27:00)



CLOSER [2004]

Portman works it like a Scores girl as the stripping centerpiece of this Mike Nichols-directed love triangle. When Clive Owen "rents" her for a dance to discuss revenge, she balances between defiant child and servile vixen, remaining in calm control as Owen threatens violence. (1:02:00) LAUREN HARRIS

release and now pushed back until March, will showcase Portman in a new way—corrupted, dangerous.

"It's going to surprise a lot of people," says *V* director Joel Silver, who wanted her for the role because he never got over how tough Portman was in *The Professional*. "The first time I saw her, she was an animal ... and she was only 12!" he says. "All that purity came later." Portman has, in many ways, played it safe for a decade: She's been interesting, she's been excellent, she's been careful not to offend anyone (she was the sweetest pathologically lying stripper you could ever hope to →

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meet). With *V*—a movie that offers a partly sympathetic view of terrorists—Portman may be on the brink of transforming into something even more interesting than a great ingénue: a great actress.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ON A SWEATY summer day, Portman is walking the leafy paths of Central Park, followed by the stares of many. (Her shaved head is still working like a homing device.) She was up late last night with friends, seeing Stevie Wonder perform at the Apollo Theater in Harlem and then banging on the door of the Magnolia Bakery downtown for late-night banana pudding. "It was one of the best times of my life," she gushes. "Stevie Wonder is my absolute favorite. I met him once at a tsunami benefit. I would never want to bother him because, really, I don't know that I have anything to add to his life. But I just told him how much he had meant to me and how he makes me feel like there's someone out there who gets me and gives me some feeling of understanding of the world. He was so sweet: I'm sure he gets that 700 times a day. But he gave me a hug and he shook my hand."

Do people ever tell Portman she makes them feel understood? Uplifted?

"Not really." She laughs. "I have moms who say thank you for being a good role model for young girls, which is cool. People are usually very nice; rarely, I'll, like, go into an ATM and there's a bunch of drunk girls coming from a bridal shower who insult me so they can have a good story for later. Like, oh, I told that Natalie girl that *Star Wars* sucks!"

Portman is making her way to her second concert in 24 hours, a performance in Central Park by M.I.A., the Sri Lankan MC, whose father was involved with the Tamil Tigers—a group of terrorists or freedom fighters, depending on your point of view.

Terrorism and violence are things Portman has spent a lot of time thinking about: She lived with them in her birthplace, Israel, and studied the "anthropology of violence" in grad school. (After Harvard, Portman spent a year in Israel, making a film and taking courses. She has not received a masters degree—yet.) "Being from Israel, I've thought a lot about suicide bombing," she says. "It's disgusting, but then most forms of violence are disgusting. The thing with suicide bombing, though, is it sort of cuts off the revenge cycle. It simplifies things. It's basically saying, 'Listen, I know you're gonna kill me. I'm just going to kill myself so you don't have to worry yourself with finding me.' It's all very fine lines that we draw, and I think our classifications of what's OK violence and what's not undermine the fact that all

BALD IS BEAUTIFUL

NATALIE PORTMAN WASN'T THE FIRST STAR TO GO KOJAK. CAN YOU NAME THE OTHERS?



1. Demi Moore 2. Sigourney Weaver 3. Billy Corgan 4. Sinead O'Connor 5. Bruce Willis 6. Melissa Etheridge

violence is terrible." She gives a little snort. "It's a ridiculous statement, I know."

Once Portman enters the cordoned-off VIP pen below the stage, a ripple goes through the crowd. First a producer from

VH1 approaches her, wanting a quote about M.I.A. "Sorry, this is my first show," she says. Soon she is standing with her arms around two strangers, posing for their snapshot. Then a dude with a backwards baseball cap wants his photo with her. "Sure," says Portman with a smirk. "I'll be Mickey Mouse."

Later, someone accurately posts on the website Gawker that Portman "was very gracious to let all these people take pictures of her and ask for her autograph while she is just trying to enjoy the concert," and true, it "was very cringe-y to watch when people started to recognize her," but (in language that Portman might use herself) "she was a totally good sport."

Portman is hardly the girl next door—she's too smart, too politically active and too elegant for that. But she is the kind of celebrity, the kind of sex symbol, you could run into at a show and, if you said something intelligent or even something nice to her, she would say something back. Except her hair is growing back. So you probably won't recognize her. [BLENDER]

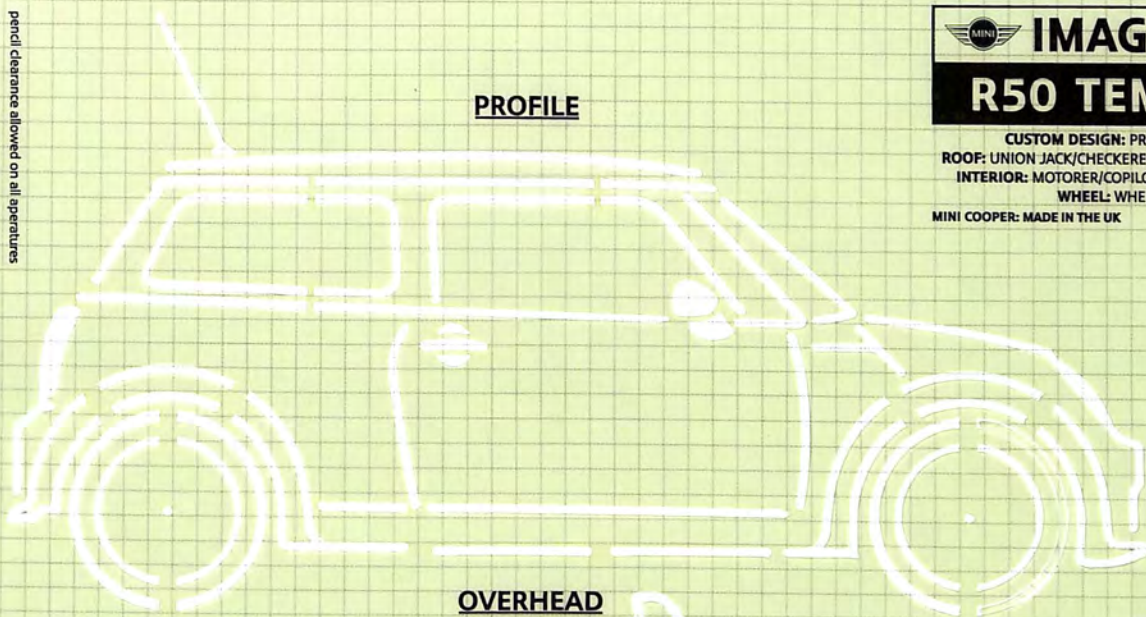


Natalie makes a case for taking over the lead in *Spider-Man 3*.

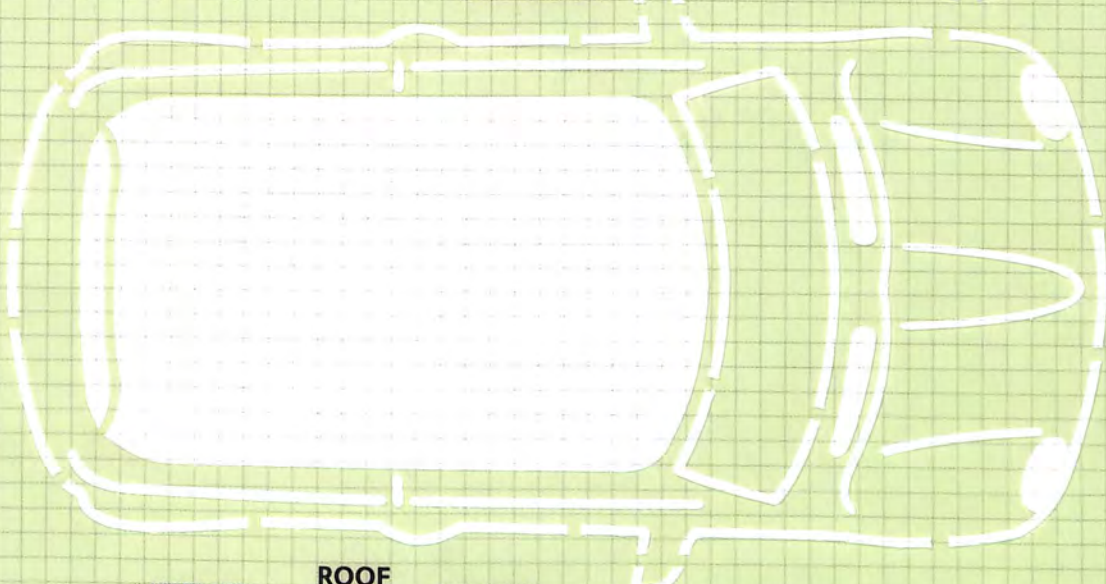


pendil clearance allowed on all apertures

PROFILE



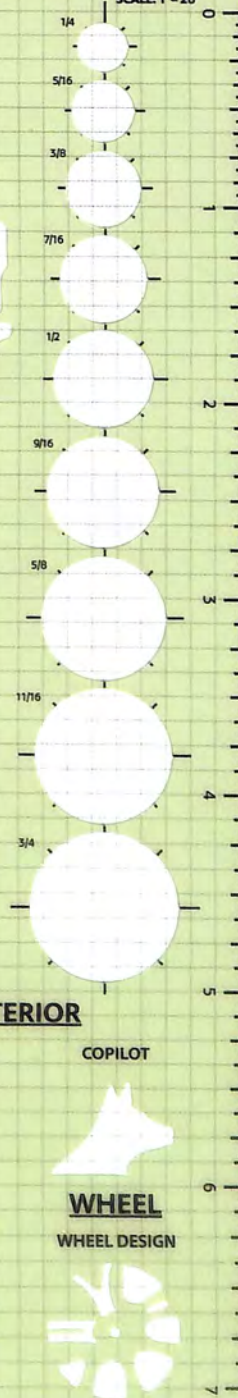
OVERHEAD



IMAG-A-MINI R50 TEMPLATE

CUSTOM DESIGN: PROFILE/OVERHEAD
ROOF: UNION JACK/CHECKERED
EXTERIOR: FLAMES/MUD
INTERIOR: MOTORER/COPILOT
WHEEL: WHEEL DESIGN
MINI COOPER: MADE IN THE UK

SCALE: 1" = 26"

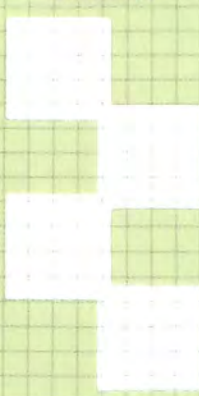


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R50

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IMAG-A-MINI

R50 TEMPLATE

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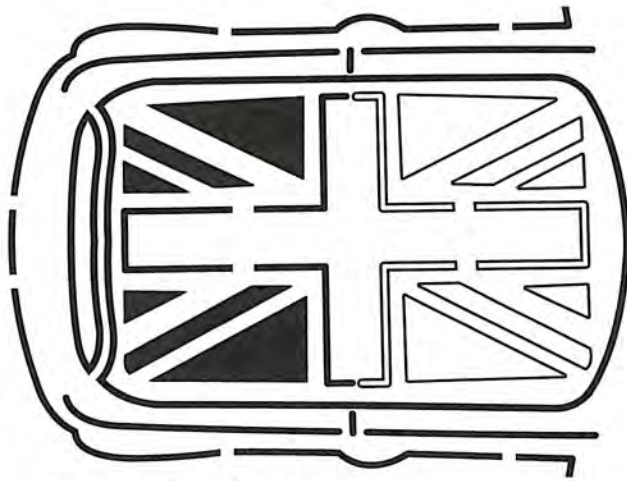


Fig.1 Union Jack Roof Graphic

Trace Union Jack pattern once, then rotate stencil 180°. Line up center tips and trace pattern again. Connect any gaps, and color in.

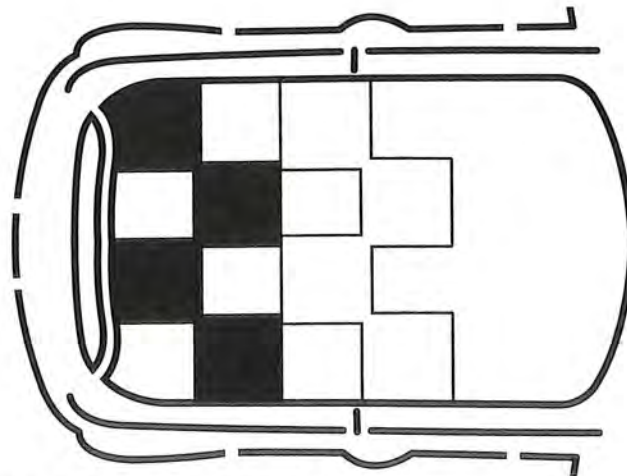


Fig.2 Checkered Flag Roof Graphic

Position check pattern on roof, and trace once. Move stencil forward so that edges meet but do not overlap. Trace again. Repeat once more, and fill in alternating boxes.



Fig.3 Wheel Design Options

Pick the shape that corresponds with the wheel design of your choice. Using the center point as a guide, trace and rotate until your design is complete.

SHAPE	WHEEL	SHAPE	WHEEL
 R99		 R92	
 R90		 R91	
 R93		 R88	

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BENJI MADDEN

WHISPER!

On August 4, **Blender** partnered with **Oakley** to celebrate **Summer X Games 11** at the Key Club in Los Angeles. Extreme sports stars, celebrities and Hollywood tastemakers sipped on **Crunk!!! Energy Drink** and **UV Vodka** while dancing to a DJ set by Good Charlotte's **Benji Madden**. Later in the night, singer **Christina Milian** and skateboarder/snowboarder **Shaun White** got a chance to shake it like a salt shaker to an electrifying performance by Atlanta rap duo, the **Ying Yang Twins**.



SUMMER ALTICE



CHRISTINA MILIAN



YING YANG TWINS TAKE THE STAGE



BLENDER PUBLISHER LEE ROSENBAUM, CHRISTINA MILIAN, OAKLEY MARKETING MANAGER JEREMY MCCASSY, RACHEL HUNTER



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50 and Sheridan:
"I told you, Jim, no
jazz hands!"



MAKE A MOVIE

WHEN JIM SHERIDAN SIGNED ON
TO DIRECT **50 CENT** IN THE STORY OF HIS
LIFE, IT BEGGED SEVERAL QUESTIONS:
COULD 50 ACT? COULD AN IRISHMAN
MAKE A HIP-HOP MOVIE? AND, MOST
IMPORTANT, WOULD THERE BE ENOUGH
BULLETPROOF VESTS TO GO AROUND?

[OR DIE TRYIN']

BY CLARK COLLIS

★ WHETHER JIM SHERIDAN

is discussing his many award-winning films or his friendship with Bono or the brutal beatings he endured growing up on the mean streets of working-class Dublin, the filmmaker tends to talk in the soft, unexcited manner of someone recalling a pleasant breakfast. So when, on the New York City set of the 50 Cent–starring *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, Sheridan recalls with a decided shudder the events of last February and March, when there seemed a real possibility that his star's life was in danger, you really start paying attention.

"Yeah, the day that somebody shot the Game fella was a bit hairy," says the director of *My Left Foot* and *In the Name of the Father*. "People were getting very nervous."

The "fella" in question was Kevin Reed, a 24-year-old associate of Compton gangsta rapper the Game, who was shot outside the offices of New York radio station Hot 97 in the course of a confrontation between the entourages of rivals the Game and 50 Cent. Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly quickly announced that he was deploying extra officers to secret locations in an attempt to "lessen the possibility of violence in this community."

"The people around 50 Cent were putting on flak jackets," recounts Sheridan, who says he was far more concerned with 50's safety than his own.

"I have this strange sense that I want to protect him," says Sheridan. "I think everybody feels that to a little extent—it's part of his appeal."

"I didn't have any concerns about coming back to New York," says 50 himself. "I was just excited to come back home."

But if director and star weren't particularly concerned about their own safety, there were others among the cast and crew who wondered whether it was a wise idea to appear in a film with someone who seems to have an almost magnetic attraction for bullets.

"There was a lot of discussion about it among the actors," admits Omar Benson Miller, who plays one of 50's crew of crack dealers and who previously appeared in 2002's Eminem–starring *8 Mile*. "My previous experience with the Shady/Aftermath record camp is that security measures are taken. But shooting here in the Bronx [home to Fat Joe, another of 50's rivals], where there's beef—that shit is real. And the security isn't here for me. You know, I don't have a bulletproof vest!"

★★★★★

SUCH ARE THE perils of making *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, a project based on 50's life that



↑ Joy Bryant and 50: "Did I ever tell you about the time I got shot?"

tracks its central character, "Marcus," from his gothically luckless childhood through his bullet-riddled crack-dealer career to his transformation into a hip-hop star. To achieve the edge of authenticity craved by young audiences—and not-so-young directors—the story of Curtis Jackson's Lazarus-like rise stars 50 himself in his first lead role or, indeed, his first role of any kind whatsoever. But with the rapper comes that reputation for attracting gunfire—and a rather different skill set than you might have gotten by casting, say, Cedric the Entertainer in the part.

This, by all accounts, has had its ups and downs. If, for example, your film features a scene in which crack is made—as *Get Rich* does—then it's pretty useful to have a guy around to inform the prop folks that, in his ample experience, the drug is not mixed in nice, straight-from-Crate-and-Barrel glass pitchers but in old coffee pots.

"I'll tell everyone I sold crack," 50 says in his trailer during the production's lunch break. "It's not that I'm proud of it—but it is the truth."

Then again, if you hire a real ex-rock-slinger as your leading man, it may be a problem if you want him to cry for the camera, given that he has trained himself not to do so under any circumstances. (To misquote Tom Hanks—50's favorite actor—in *A League of Their Own*, there's no crying in crack-dealing.) More unexpectedly, it may also be a problem if you want him to lose his cool for a scene.

"People think it is easy for me to act aggressive because that's what I did in the environment," says 50. "But if you're too aggressive, you'll get killed. Because you intimidate people to the point that a kid rushes off the stoop and just blows your head off—because he's afraid of you."

While *Blender* is well aware that 50 is not the safest person to be around, it is still hard to imagine that this polite, gregarious and droll 30-year-old was selling drugs, gun in pants, just a few brief years ago. 50 Cent's rise has been nothing short of meteoric, particularly for an artist who was actually dropped by his record label, Columbia, after being shot nine times in 2000. Since

his subsequent Eminem-assisted signing to Interscope and the release of his debut album in February 2003, the rapper has become a hugely popular and, thanks to his indisputable gangsta credentials, ultra-hip cultural brand name. 50's album sales—his most recent CD, *The Massacre*, is already quadruple platinum—are merely the most obvious aspect of a merchandising empire that includes mineral water, the G-Unit clothing line, his recent autobiography *From Pieces to Weight*, a Reebok shoe line and a new videogame, *50 Cent: Bulletproof*, not to mention 50-approved releases by G-Unit posse members Tony Yayo, Young Buck and Lloyd Banks.

However, just as cultural brand names

"I HAD THIS STRANGE SENSE

can rise at breathtaking speed, so they can fall. In an attempt to help their star as much as possible, the men behind *Get Rich*, including Interscope chairman Jimmy Iovine, have closely followed the blueprint provided by *8 Mile*, on which Iovine was also a producer. Like *Get Rich*, that film—which grossed \$120 million in the U.S., from a \$40 million budget—found its star rapper essentially playing himself. *8 Mile* also featured an array of seasoned actors to support its untested lead, as does *Get Rich*, whose cast includes veteran actor and director Bill Duke, *Antwone Fisher*'s stunning Joy Bryant, who plays 50's girlfriend and, as the rapper's manager, *Hustle & Flow* star Terrence Dashon Howard. Finally, *8 Mile* was also directed by a filmmaker, L.A. *Confidential*'s Curtis Hanson, more known for getting great performances from actors than for any hip-hop pedigree.

Sheridan, a longtime rap fan who once owned a dog named—yes—Snoop, seems like an even smarter choice than Hanson.

MICHAEL GIBSON



GETTING SHOT NINE TIMES:

IT'S NOT ALL GOOD!

SURE, THINGS WORKED OUT FOR 50, BUT AS CAREER MOVES GO, THIS IS NOT WITHOUT RISKS. FOR EXAMPLE:

INFECTION

"The worst thing is sepsis, an infection that can spread throughout your body," says Ines Gilbert, a nurse practitioner in Topeka, Kansas. Bullets take bacteria from your skin or gastrointestinal tract to places in your body it doesn't belong. "The infection can linger, and you'll be stuck in a hospital for years."

EXPENSES

Being stuck in a hospital ain't cheap—a flat entry rate for a trauma ward can be around \$5,800, with ICU costing about \$2,800 a day. A month-long stay can easily approach \$1 million. Fortunately, you'll be selling so many records, money will be no object. Right?

BLOOD LOSS, BLOOD CLOTTING

Spill more than one unit (about 16 ounces) of blood during your legend-making altercation? That alone can kill you. "Even if you're stabilized in a hospital bed, the immobility can cause fat tissue to create a fatal blood clot in your heart, head or lungs," says nurse Gilbert. That's not great!

LOCATION, LOCATION

If you absolutely insist on taking nine bullets, try to do so in parts of your body that are farthest from your vital organs, such as your doughy ass or fingers and toes ... but even that won't necessarily guarantee a safe recovery. "I have seen patients die from a gunshot wound to the foot," nurse Gilbert warns. "Feet are unclean and don't heal easily, so gangrene sets in. Honestly, it's not a good thing to get shot." STEVE KANDELL

His films have frequently hinged around characters who, like the younger 50 Cent, found themselves set apart from society in an actual or metaphorical prison, whether it's *In the Name of the Father's* wrongly convicted terrorist suspects or *My Left Foot's* physically disabled central character. And his heroes tend to be less than conventionally, well, heroic.

"My mother always liked the mad footballers," says Sheridan. "The ones that were always drunk. She had that love for the outlaw and I think she passed it on to me. Also, I understand the world 50 comes from. I think there are a lot of similarities with the Irish experience and the black experience. To be honest, I don't really understand when people say, oh, it's a black film. I'm not making a black or white film. I'm just making a film!"

Iovine compares *Get Rich* not to *8 Mile* but to some of the landmark gangster films of the past few decades. "The reason this movie exists is because I wanted to show the why behind urban rage, behind 50's rage," he says. "That's what *Goodfellas* and *The Godfather* did, but you rarely get that in contemporary urban movies."

Sheridan says *Get Rich* is not really about what he calls the "thug-crack world" at all. "I think, at the start, it was in danger of glamorizing all that," he says. "But now, it's almost more like a family saga. More like a *My Left Foot* type of movie."

THAT I WANTED TO PROTECT 50," SAYS SHERIDAN. "THAT'S PART OF HIS APPEAL."

The production's real X factor is the acting ability of 50 himself. The fact that Eminem managed to pull off a convincing performance in *8 Mile* is no guarantee that 50 will be able to do the same. And while Eminem's early years were hardly without incident, they can hardly compare to the assorted horrors and violence that 50 experienced and which this unschooled thespian is now being required to convincingly relive in front of the camera.

When *Blender* broaches the subject with Sheridan of having, as his lead actor, someone who has never acted before, he says that he was never worried.

"He's so intelligent and understated," he says of his leading man. "And the problem with most movies is that there's too much acting going on."

In his attempts to recreate his life onscreen, particularly the more traumatic episodes, 50 is well aware that he has lucked out with Sheridan, who was offered the project by Iovine after being introduced

by their mutual friend, Bono.

"The opportunity of working with Jim Sheridan on my very first film is extraordinary," says 50. "He's been the best thing for me."

50 also says that he hopes the film will show the perils of the drug-dealer lifestyle.

"The outcome is you die or go to jail," he says flatly.

At this point *Blender* feels obliged to point out, half-jokingly, that he himself is proof that there is a third way: to become a multiplatinum rap star. The up-to-that-point utterly gracious 50 fixes us with a pitiless stare.

"That's because I made the decision to stop," he says.

The film's screenplay, which was written by regular *Sopranos* scribe Terence Winter, includes all of the important bullet points—in every sense—of the rapper's history. Opening with a robbery of a check-cashing store committed by 50 and his crew, it then flashes back to his childhood before cinematically filling out the protagonist's personal history: The mother who dealt drugs and then, when 50 was only 8 years old, was drugged and gassed to death; the grandmother who raised him; his own experiences selling crack; his arrests and incarcerations; his attempts to leave the "environment" and become a hip-hop star; and, of course, his 2000 shooting.

The latter, says 50, was the hardest

sequence to film.

"I've got all this gooey blood and shit on me," he says. "I'm laying on a table in my drawers for four hours. They got doctors operating on me, and the lights and everything." 50 says that it felt as if he really was back in the operating room. "Everybody else was just saying their lines and moving on cue."

Still, *Blender* says, presumably it wasn't as bad as actually being shot.

"It absolutely wasn't," laughs the rapper. "Because when they said 'cut,' I got up and washed that shit off!"

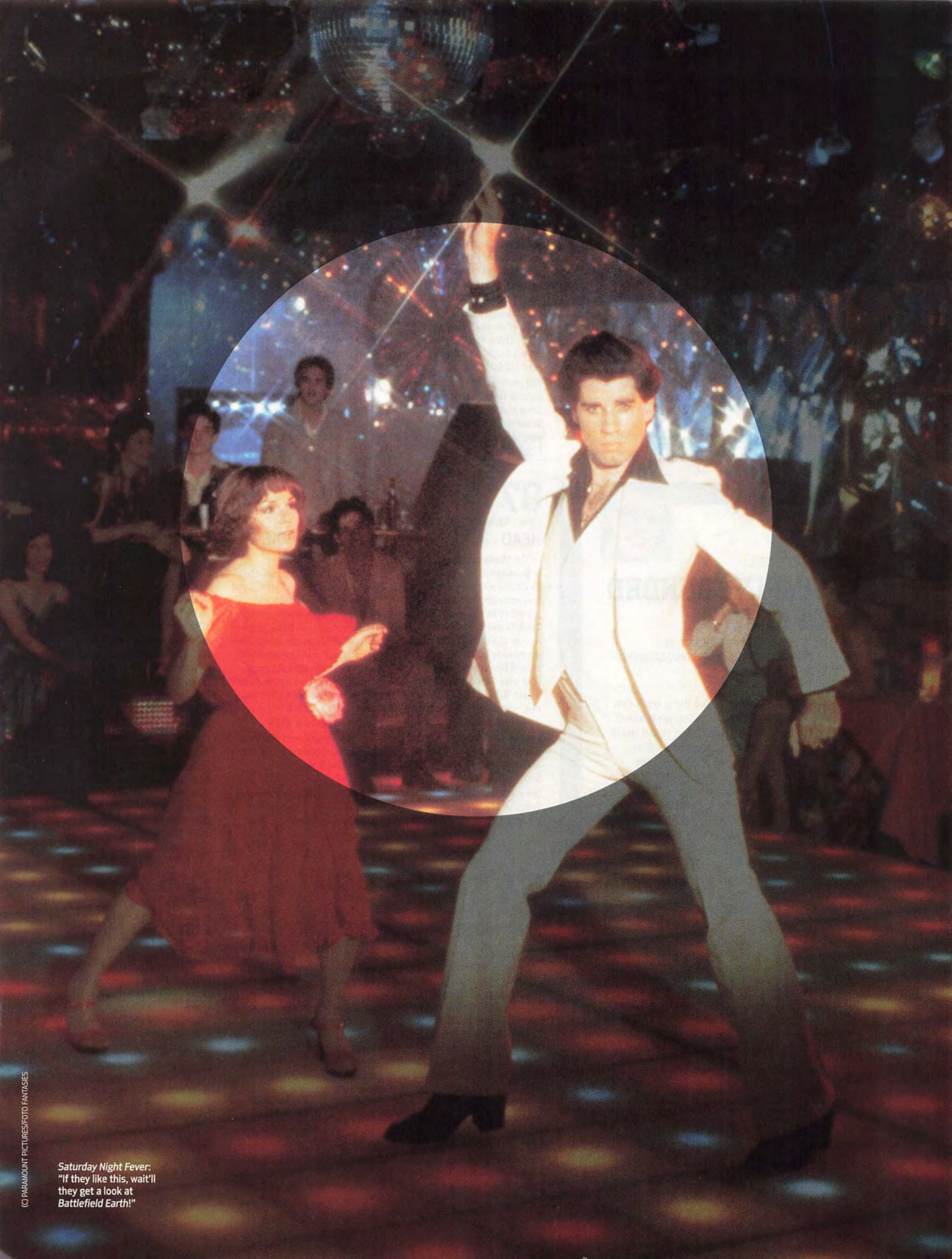
50 even eventually did learn how to cry after Sheridan told him to think of the worst thing he could. Given 50's history, *Blender* had assumed he would think of the day his mother died. Or maybe the day of his shooting. But no.

"I actually thought about failing," he says. "I do everything possible to make things work. I put so much time and energy into it. So I thought about failure." [BLENDER]



DO YOU FEEL THE *SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER*? ARE YOU READY FOR A TRIP TO *8 MILE*? WILL YOU BE PLAYING "STONEHENGE" TOMORROW? IF THE ANSWERS ARE "YES," "YES" AND "NO FREAKIN' WAY," THEN YOU ARE READY FOR *BLENDER*'S LIST OF THE MOST AURALLY PLEASING BIG-SCREEN EXTRAVAGANZAS EVER MADE





Saturday Night Fever:
"If they like this, wait'll
they get a look at
Battlefield Earth!"



Elvis does time at film's most fabulous prison.

100

HANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

THAT THING YOU DO! [1996]

→ Tom Hanks's directorial debut about a one-hit-wonder band in the post-Beatles '60s is so amiably obvious, the group is called the Wonders! Get it? But what the film lacks in subtlety it more than makes up for in dead-accurate period musical detail.

Best musical moment: The band's "eureka!" moment when "That Thing You Do!" mutates from a turgid ballad into sunny pop. (12:50)

Did you know? The maddeningly catchy, Oscar-nominated title song was written by Adam Schlesinger of Fountains of Wayne.

99

HANG THE DJ

PUMP UP THE VOLUME [1990]

→ Dweeb by day, insurrectionist pirate DJ by night, Mark Hunter (Christian Slater) captivates Arizona high school kids with his blend of nihilistic advice and an eclectic playlist including the Beastie Boys and Leonard Cohen. One of the few occasions that Slater's twitchy Jack Nicholson schtick actually improved a movie.

Best musical moment: The MC5's "Kick Out the Jams" prompts teen malcontents to go on the rampage brandishing a gigantic model penis. (00:45)

Did you know? Slater's all-time favorite song is Elvis Presley's "A Little Less Conversation."

98

BEATLEMANIACS

I WANNA HOLD YOUR HAND [1978]

→ In *Forrest Gump*, director Robert Zemeckis recast modern history through the eyes of a retarded hick. But before that, he recast the Beatles' 1964 appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show* through the eyes of retarded-seeming Jersey teens. Improbable and even cloying, the movie still succeeds in personalizing a watershed moment.

Best musical moment: "Love Me Do" seen from the perspective of hysterical audience members. (1:32:00)

Did you know? Earning \$1.9 million, this was the lowest-grossing film in Universal's history.



WHAT WAS IT LIKE ...

"IT SIMPLY SOUNDED PERFECT!"

PETER FONDA ON CHOOSING "BORN TO BE WILD" TO SOUNDTRACK THE BIKE-RIDING SEQUENCE IN *EASY RIDER*

→ "WE DIDN'T KNOW, shooting the scene when we took off on the motorcycles, what music was going to be there. We didn't start to put music to the film until the editing process. Both [*Easy Rider* director] Dennis Hopper and I were firm believers in cutting to music, and we used our combined vinyl collection as a library of possibilities, and it simply sounded perfect for the title sequence to have Steppenwolf's cover of Mars Bonfire's "Born to Be Wild." We had already used their cover of Hoyt Axton's "The Pusher" as a bridge to the title sequence and a foreboding of the end. [Steppenwolf frontman] John Kay and I will be linked in such a marvelous way long after we have both joined the Great Mystery."



The deadbeat cousins Evel Knievel never discusses.

97

MONKEE BUSINESS

HEAD [1968]

→ The Monkees' plan to obliterate their image as cuddly, made-for-TV clowns with a self-deprecating, anti-consumerism screed proved to be the band's death knell. Come for the plotless collection of sketches that can generously be called "experimental filmmaking"—the Prefab Four play dandruff flakes in one skit—but stay for the sophisticated musical numbers.

Best musical moment: Mickey leaps to his death—figuratively and commercially—to "Porpoise Song." (00:01)

Did you know? Jack Nicholson (who, like Sonny Liston, makes a cameo) co-wrote the script.

96

AMERICAN IDOL

BYE BYE BIRDIE [1963]

→ Sweet Apple, Ohio, wouldn't make anyone's list of rock & roll hotspots. But when Conrad Birdie—a pelvis-shaking crooner who strongly resembles another '50s idol—descends on the town for one last show before shipping off to the Army, all heck breaks loose. This adaptation of the Broadway satire stars Swedish bombshell Ann-Margaret, the Lindsay Lohan of 1963.

Best musical moment: Conrad sings about sowing his wild oats in "A Lot of Livin' to Do." (1:12:00)

Did you know? Birdie's name was allegedly inspired by country star Conway Twitty.

95

NEW WAVE NEW YORK

SMITHEREENS [1982]

→ The debut film from Susan Seidelman follows New York scenester-loser Wren (Susan Berman) as she vacillates between boyfriends. Blessed with a superb new wave soundtrack, the film offers an extensive tour of the East Village's apocalyptic moonscape.

Best musical moment: A clanging Feelies track cranks up the audience's discomfort as Wren discovers just how many bridges she's burned. (1:23:00)

Did you know? In his first movie appearance, Chris Noth—*Sex and the City*'s "Mr Big"—has a tiny role as a transvestite prostitute.

94

GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNIN'

EASY RIDER [1969]

→ Light on plot, heavy on symbolism and long on style, *Easy Rider* also has a soundtrack as legendary as its stars. In fact, you can almost pinpoint the exact moment the '70s began: Captain America (Peter Fonda) kick-starting his stars-and-stripes chopper to the strains of Steppenwolf's "Born to Be Wild." **Best musical moment:** Fonda, Dennis Hopper and a hitchhiker cruising to The Band's "The Weight." (20:00)

Did you know? The LSD sequence got its look because someone accidentally exposed a reel of film to sunlight.

93

KILLER CAMEO

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL! [1958]

→ Though its hep slang may be cringe-worthy—the movie is 47 years old—the film holds up because its true "just say no" agenda isn't revealed until the end. Until then, Russ Tamblyn's pusher is cinema's least sympathetic teen protagonist, hitting on his teacher and "blasting a joint" in the principal's office.

Best musical moment: Jerry Lee Lewis's title song. (00:01)

Did you know? Tamblyn is the father of *Joan of Arcadia* cutie Amber Tamblyn, while co-star John Drew Barrymore is the father of—that's right!—Drew Barrymore.

92

LEAVE IT TO BEAVER

EDDIE AND THE CRUISERS [1983]

→ A "cult classic" (read: bomb), *Cruisers* is better known for John Cafferty and the Beaver Brown Band's hit single "On the Dark Side" than for its actual plot. Which is a good thing.

Best musical moment: "Dark Side" evolves from awkward ballad to the Cruisers' signature song to cheap Atlantic City revue number. The entire lifespan of a song played out in minutes. (31:00)

Did you know? The heroin-addicted sax player is played by one of the Beaver Brown Band.

91

STAR AND BARS

JAILHOUSE ROCK [1957]

→ After killing a guy in a bar with two punches, Elvis is sent to prison, where he passes time singing rather than, say, being brutally raped. Released, he signs a recording contract, hits it big, screws over his friends, bottoms out and, yes, finds redemption. Edgier than all his subsequent 28 movies.

Best musical moment: Not the title song, but the lawyer supplying handclaps during "Treat Her Right." (51:00)

Did you know? Judy Tyler, who plays Elvis's manager-love interest, died in a car crash soon after wrapping the film.

90

EVERYBODY MUST GET STONED

COCKSUCKER BLUES [1972]

→ Shot by Beat photographer Robert Frank during the Rolling Stones' debauched '72 U.S. tour, this bootleg-only doc features a masturbating Mick Jagger, a groupie orgy at 30,000 feet and the title song ("Where can I get my cock sucked/Where can I get my ass fucked")—all in the first 15 minutes. Shockingly, the Stones were not pleased, and sued to prevent its release.

Best musical moment: Jagger and opening act Stevie Wonder duet on "Satisfaction." (54:00)

Did you know? Frank is still permitted to show the film publicly once a year—so long as he is in attendance.

84

WHAT A FEELING!

FLASHDANCE [1983]

→ The first movie from Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer, the production team who mastered the art of making the soundtrack album a lucrative ad for their films by marrying potential hits with showy action sequences tailor-made for MTV (see also *Top Gun*, *Beverly Hills Cop*). *Flashdance* has exotic dancing welder Alex (Jennifer Beals) trying to make it as a ballerina in a festa of straining leotards revisited by J. Lo in her video for "I'm Glad" in 2003.

Best musical moment: Alex rips through an extreme ballet workout to Michael Sembello's "Maniac." (12:00)

Did you know? As a teenager, Jennifer Beals babysat for Regis Philbin's kids.



89

VALLEY VIXENS

FOXES [1980]

→ Despite opening with the ominous words "Starring Scott Baio," *Foxes* is a raw drama of four teenage Valley girls (among them, Jodie Foster) looking for cheap thrills in the shadow of the '70s, where divorce is high and morality low. Most damaged is Annie (ex-Runaway Cherie Curry), a wild child running with Hollywood street trash.

Best musical moment: A solo on the guitar-synth "keytar" hybrid at a show by hair metallers Angel. (35:00)

Did you know? Foster was the first choice to play Princess Leia in *Star Wars* but was under contract to Disney at the time.

88

ALL DOLLED UP

SUPERSTAR: THE KAREN CARPENTER STORY [1987]

→ The tragedy of anorexic soft-rock princess Karen Carpenter, reenacted by Barbie dolls. Though it sounds like a proto-*Team America* romp, it's a sober commentary on body image. After director Todd Haynes received cease-and-desist letters from Richard Carpenter and A&M Records, he could no longer show the film.

Best musical moment: A Vietnam and Holocaust montage is soundtracked by "We've Only Just Begun." (39:00)

Did you know? Haynes made "Karen" appear even thinner by whittling away at the doll.

87

PRIEST RULES!

HEAVY METAL PARKING LOT [1986]

→ A scant 16 minutes long, John Heyn and Jeff Krulik's collection of interviews with tailgaters outside a Judas Priest/Dokken concert in Maryland is as sublime as it is simple. The joy with which these heshers pledge their devotion to rawk evokes nostalgia—if not for the music, then at least for this magical time before irony.

Best musical moment: One mulleted teen rages against "that punk shit." (08:30)

Did you know? Though bootleg tapes circulated for years, the movie wasn't screened theatrically until 2000.

86

HOLY ROCK & ROLLERS

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR [1991]

→ Dear Mel Gibson: Loved your Jesus flick, but why so glum? This adaptation of the Andrew Lloyd Webber rock opera also covered Christ's busy last week, but with more guitar solos and less scourging. Harder-edged and more musically credible than Webber's usual fare, this is, truly, better than *Cats*.

Best musical moment: Shaggy disciples chorus "What's the buzz?" looking in need of baths and gainful employment. (11:30)

Did you know? The scene in which Judas is chased by tanks was directed by Jesus himself, actor Ted Neeley.

85

UP CHUCK

HAIL! HAIL! ROCK 'N' ROLL [1987]

→ Through much of his illustrious career, Chuck Berry toured alone, hopping onstage with anonymous bands. For this concert to mark Berry's 60th birthday, though, Keith Richards gave him the gift of an all-star band of devotees. Taylor Hackford (*Ray*) captures not only the show in Berry's hometown of St. Louis but also the contentious rehearsals that preceded it.

Best musical moment: Chuck and Keef bicker as they work out the intro to "Carol." (29:50)

Did you know? A pre-fame Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band once backed Berry.



83

TOON-FULL

YELLOW SUBMARINE [1968]

→ While some Beatles movies have aged horribly, the animated *Submarine* remains a free-spirited romp. That's partly because of its brilliant Peter Max-inspired color schemes, but it's also thanks to its storybook-simple plot: The Beatles (voiced by actors) battle the music-bashing Blue Meanies with songs and dry wit.

Best musical moment: The Pythonesque photo-animation of "Eleanor Rigby." (11:00)

Did you know? George's original "vocalist" was discovered to be an army deserter during filming and had to be replaced.

82

MTV MORONS

TAPEHEADS [1988]

→ A pre-fame John Cusack and Tim Robbins play idiot music video directors in this offbeat, quotable '80s relic. Also on hand are Ted Nugent, Doug E. Fresh and soul greats Sam Moore and Junior Walker. But our favorite is Dead Boy Stiv Bators as the lead singer of the doomed but excellently named metal band Blender Children.

Best musical moment: Ska-rock kings Fishbone perform as Ranchbone ... at a country and western bar. (43:00)

Did you know? *Tapeheads* was produced by former Monkee Michael Nesmith, no stranger to weird rock movies (see No. 97).

81

FAB FAUX

THE RUTLES: ALL YOU NEED IS CASH [1978]

→ This mockumentary, following the career of the fictitious "Prefab Four," is as much a slavish Beatles tribute as it is an absurdist spoof. Written by and starring Monty Python's Eric Idle, it also features inspired ad libs from Mick Jagger, John Belushi and Bill Murray.

Best musical moment: Singer Ron Nasty and his girlfriend announce their engagement in a running shower, fully clothed—a jab at John and Yoko. (57:55)

Did you know? In 1996, the Rutles "re-formed" sans Idle and recorded *Archaeology*.



THE WORST ROCK & ROLL MOVIE EVER!

SERGEANT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND [1978]

➔ **SERGEANT PEPPER'S LONELY Hearts Club Band** is a very bad movie. Its script, constructed around the lyrics of 29 Beatles songs, is ludicrous and nonsensical. Its cast chiefly comprises non-acting, substance-abusing musicians such as Alice Cooper and Aerosmith (about whom director Michael Schultz innocently inquired, "Who are those drunks on my fucking set?"). The film is also largely dialogue-free, forcing its leads, Peter Frampton and the Bee Gees, to rely on an almost entirely nonexistent ability to emote without speaking. Hugely expensive—Schultz claims he's "blocked out" the exact cost—the film was a critical and commercial disaster from which several of its principals never fully recovered.

But is *Sgt. Pepper* really any worse than, say, *Glitter*? Lord, yes! Where most crappy music movies only besmirch the reputations of the people involved, this one blackened the name of a band that had almost nothing to do with it (following the movie's release, George Harrison reportedly considered a lawsuit). Moreover, despite a plot that finds Frampton and the Bee Gees' small-town rock group battling Donald Pleasance's oily record company chief, the film's attempt to meld the biggest stars of the day with songs by the biggest band ever—and quality or logic be damned—is as rankly commercial as anything Pleasance's character could think up. As one critic noted, "cynicism and contempt dripped onto those reels like butter onto popcorn." CLARK COLLIS

80

RAP PARTY

KRUSH GROOVE [1985]

→ Proof rappers were dreadful actors long before *Soul Plane*, this charmingly old-school flick chronicles the rise of Krush Groove Records, a fictional facsimile of Def Jam. The plot's so thin it's nearly invisible, but the musical performances—including Run-D.M.C. and the Beastie Boys—make it an essential document of hip-hop history.

Best musical moment: A 17-year-old LL Cool J wows the Krush Groove suits with "I Can't Live Without My Radio." (48:00)

Did you know? *LAX* star Blair Underwood's turn as "Russell Walker" (a.k.a. Simmons) marked his big-screen debut.

79

REELS OF STEEL

SCRATCH [2001]

→ Acclaimed rockumentarian Doug Pray (see also *Hype!*) directs this fast-paced portrait of competitive DJs—or "turntablists," as the geekier among them prefer to be known. From hearing Grand Wizard Theodore describe his accidental innovation to crate-digging with DJ Shadow, it's the only DJ doc you'll ever need.

Best musical moment: The Beastie Boys' Mix Master Mike cuts and scratches while his dog Francesca spins around on the turntable. (52:00)

Did you know? Pray made *Scratch* with equipment borrowed from *Menace II Society* directors the Hughes brothers.

78

KARATE KID

ELVIS: THE MOVIE [1979]

→ As opposed to *Elvis: The Postage Stamp* or *Elvis: The Gaudy Velvet Painting*, this made-for-TV biopic, which mercifully spares the fat-E declining years, is a cut above the typical made-for-TV movie, if only for the talent involved—Kurt Russell is a dead ringer for Presley and John Carpenter took a break from helming schlock-horror classics to direct.

Best musical moment: Russell's white-jumpsuited, karate-kicking "Burning Love." (1:12:00)

Did you know? Russell's film debut was in Elvis's *It Happened at the World's Fair* as a kid who kicks the King in the shins.

77

BRILL-IANT

GRACE OF MY HEART [1996]

→ This Allison Anders flick aspires to be not only a veiled bio of Brill Building songwriter Carole King but also a history of pop music writ small. Though solid original songs are provided by Elvis Costello, Burt Bacharach and King herself, the real fun is in guessing each character's real-life doppelgänger.

Best musical moment: Matt Dillon oversees Christendom's longest theremin solo. (1:17:21)

Did you know? In the lead role as an influential singer-songwriter, Illeana Douglas never actually sings a note.

76

HIP-HOP HILARITY

CB4 [1993]

→ Chris Rock was a mere *SNL* scene-stealer when he starred in this hilarious *Spinal Rap*, playing a suburbanite who transforms himself into a jheri-curled gangsta. A messy collection of pop-culture spoofs, *CB4*'s best moments lampoon hip-hop's big-medallion decadence and dumb vulgarity (the band's biggest hit is "Sweet of My Balls").

Best musical moment: The jail-suit-clad band's performance of "Balls," which invokes its titular testes more than 20 times. (54:30)

Did you know? Director Tamra Davis is married to Beastie Boy Mike D.

75

THE THIRD WHITE STRIPE

COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER [1980]

→ Fragile but never pathetic, Sissy Spacek nails the part of Loretta Lynn as the child bride progresses from Kentucky mines to the pantheon of country music. Avoiding country stereotypes and biopic clichés, the movie makes Lynn's improbable life story an interesting and unpredictable reality.

Best musical moment: Lynn calms her nerves while recording her first album by having her rugrats sit in among studio musicians. (46:00)

Did you know? The Band drummer Levon Helm plays Lynn's adoring father.

74

HE'S THE DJ

AMERICAN HOT WAX [1978]

→ Slip on your shades for this mostly true, entirely cool biopic of Alan Freed, the charismatic radio DJ who introduced black R&B to white kids. Freed's color-blind pioneering ultimately cost him his career, but as he tells one of the stuffy G-men assigned to bring him down, "You can stop *me*—but you're never gonna stop rock & roll."

Best musical moment: Chuck Berry duck-walks his way through a set at the climactic all-star concert. (1:08:00)

Did you know? Freed is credited by many with coining the term "rock & roll."

73

PLEASE KILMER ME

THE DOORS [1991]

→ Native American spirit guides probably didn't have as much influence on Jim Morrison (Val Kilmer) as Oliver Stone would have it, but the singer is otherwise well represented here in all his boozy, chaotic pomp. A great, grandiose biopic, though Meg Ryan plays Jim's "old lady" like someone's mom in a hippie wig.

Best musical moment: Ray Manzarek writes the intro to "Light My Fire" in a matter of seconds. (20:00)

Did you know? Comedian Denis Leary accurately sums up the movie as "I'm drunk, I'm nobody, I'm drunk, I'm famous, I'm drunk, I'm dead."

Run-D.M.C. and their Adidas.



72

ANGRY MANAGEMENT

THE IDOLMAKER [1980]

→ You can make shlubs into teen idols—but it's much harder to make them keep their dicks in their pants. That is the moral of this '50s-set drama, based on the story of Frankie Avalon manager Bob Marcucci. In the lead role, the late Ray Sharkey is almost as outstanding as the 3-D eyebrows of his youthful protégé, *The O.C.*'s Peter Gallagher.

Best musical moment: Forced back onstage by Sharkey after being mobbed by rabid fans, Gallagher vows them with his signature song, "Baby," and an idol is, indeed, made. (1:22:00)

Did you know? Director Taylor Hackford later brought us *Ray*.

71

THAT'LL BE THE MOVIE

THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY [1978]

→ It's hard to believe that basic-cable crackpot Gary Busey once snared himself a Best Actor Oscar nod—until you see him drawling his way out of roller rinks in Lubbock, Texas, to help birth rock & roll. Busey's Holly has a loose-limbed charm that's only magnified by the proto-Rivers Cuomo glasses.

Best musical moment: Holly—with the Big Bopper and Ritchie Valens—electrifies a crowd of lowans with a string of hits in what would be their final performance. (1:34:00)

Did you know? Gary Busey and the actors portraying the Crickets played all the movie's songs themselves.

David Byrne mimes stabbing his tailor in the stomach.



70

DOWN 'CYDE

WHAT'S UP, FATLIP? [1999]

→ After the Pharcyde booted Derrick "Fatlip" Stewart for his cocaine habit, the L.A. MC sank into obscurity. In 1999, Spike Jonze filmed a video for his single "What's Up Fatlip?," then shot this brief documentary. Tender and funny, it also teaches viewers how to pee while wearing a clown suit.

Best musical moment: Fatlip explains how he got a blowjob from a transvestite—inspiring the Pharcyde's "Oh Shit." (18:21)

Did you know? Two members of the Pharcyde still tour. Once, Fatlip tried to climb onstage and join in, but they kicked him off.

69

GLAMORAMA

VELVET GOLDMINE [1998]

→ The story of glam rock's '70s heyday—rewritten, fan-fiction style, to make the rumored Iggy Pop/David Bowie gay affair fact. Bowie analogue "Brian Slade" fakes his own death in a camp spectacle of lurid clothes, exhilarating music and characters who talk in Oscar Wilde epigrams.

Best musical moment: Ewan McGregor channels an Iggy stage performance, waving his penis at the audience. (34:00)

Did you know? When Slade sings Roxy Music's "Ladytron" and "2HB," it's actually Radiohead's Thom Yorke you hear.

68

PERFECTLY SUITED

STOP MAKING SENSE [1984]

→ Filmed over a three-night sold-out stint in Los Angeles, *Sense* finds the Talking Heads at the zenith of both their creative and commercial success—one of the great art-school bands putting on the biggest exhibit of their career. The show builds slowly, with David Byrne taking the stage by himself, eventually opening the stage up to his bandmates, multimedia visual displays, moving sets and, of course, the famous big suit.

Best musical moment: The joyous, nine-person rendition of "Burning Down the House." (21:18)

Did you know? In a promotional clip for the film, Byrne, made up as a black journalist, interviews himself.

67

DEATH CABARET FOR CUTIE

MOULIN ROUGE [2001]

→ If you like your musicals garishly over-the-top and seemingly filtered through the aesthetic sensibility of a mad-genius drag queen, this is your *Citizen Kane*—a doomed romance set in turn-of-the-century Paris using radically rethought covers of pop hits to tell its story, to sometimes brilliant effect.

Best musical moment: The soaring "Heroes" and "I Will Always Love You"—quoting duet between Ewan McGregor and Nicole Kidman. (49:00)

Did you know? Cat Stevens refused permission to use "Father and Son"—he objected to the film's sexual content.



66

MAKING BACON

FOOTLOOSE [1984]

→ In the town of Bomont, dancing has been banned for fear of "spiritual corruption." Urbanite new boy Kevin Bacon rolls into school blasting Quiet Riot and is soon fooling around with the preacher's daughter and organizing a big shindig. Entry-level anti-establishment material boosted by the Kenny Loggins title track.

Best musical moment: A game of chicken—in tractors!—goes down to Bonnie Tyler's "Holding Out for a Hero." (28:00)

Did you know? Bacon nearly didn't get the part because a female studio executive said he wasn't "fuckable" enough.

65

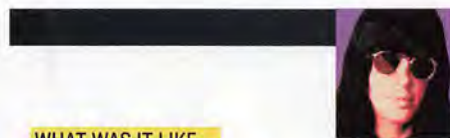
WIGOUT!

HAIRSPRAY [1988]

→ John Waters's first family-grade movie sees big-hearted, big-boned Tracy Turnblad (Ricki Lake) trying to end segregation in '60s Baltimore through teen dances like the Roach and the Madison. Bursting with hormones and tooth-rotting rock & roll, it also features stage mom Debbie Harry in a wig taller than husband Sonny Bono.

Best musical moment: Tracy dances "The Bug" in a dress with cockroaches on it. (1:20:00)

Did you know? Lake rapidly lost weight because of dance training and had to "eat like crazy" to maintain her figure for the part.



WHAT WAS IT LIKE ...

"A LITTLE DAZED"

MARKY RAMONE ON SHOOTING THE FANTASY SCENE IN *ROCK 'N' ROLL HIGH SCHOOL*

→ "THE 'I WANT You Around' scene is the character Riff Randell's fantasy—after she's smoked a joint she imagines Joey singing to her and all the other band members in various places in her room and around her house. I'm in the backyard with the drum set, and we all end up in the shower, where she leans over and falls on me. It took a while to shoot: For us, it was get up at 5:30, 6:00 in the morning to be on the set. In those days Dee Dee and I used to indulge in a lot of things. I drank, and Dee Dee was into drugs. When we were doing the exterior shots, fans who knew that we were doing this would throw bottles of wine, pills and marijuana over the school fence. Dee Dee would just pocket it and take whatever was thrown over. So in that situation, with that going on, you're a little confounded ... a little dazed."



Ironically, this high school is clean by modern standards.

64

HARLEM NIGHTS

SPARKLE [1976]

→ Before *Glitter*, even before *Honey*, there was this original R&B fairy tale. Irene Cara stars as Sparkle, a poor teenager in 1950s Harlem who dreams of being a star. With help from her manager-boyfriend and a killer soundtrack by funkmaster Curtis Mayfield, she tackles obstacles big (a drug-addicted sister) and small (sharing her name with a My Little Pony) en route to a happy ending.

Best musical moment: Sparkle brings down the house opening for Ray Charles at Carnegie Hall. (1:33:00)

Did you know? The screenplay was written by director and notorious *Batman*-ruiner Joel Schumacher.

63

BLEMISH FREE

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE FABULOUS STAINS [1982]

→ A proto-feminist rock band, the Stains are working-class teens who dye their hair, pick up guitars and cause a riot among disaffected teenagers everywhere. Touring with a world-weary gang of British punks (including ex-Sex Pistols Steve Jones and Paul Cook), they lose their innocence and idealism.

Best musical moment: The first big show, in which they play the sparse "Waste of Time." (29:00)

Did you know? Paramount, fearing the movie wouldn't go over with teen audiences, never released it.

62

TOTALLY TRIPINDICULAR

VALLEY GIRL [1983]

→ Before Nic Cage went all A-list, he earned his stripes in this teen-angst comedy playing Hollywood punker Randy, who crosses musical and socioeconomic lines to fall in love with a tubular mallrat. Director Martha Coolidge comes off like John Hughes with rock cred, with ample screen time devoted to new wave asterisks the Plimsouls and Josie Cotton.

Best musical moment: Cotton's medley at the high school prom, with limp-wristed choreography to accompany "Johnny, Are You Queer?" (1:26:00)

Did you know? Coolidge was required by MGM to show female breasts at least four times.

61

THEY DON'T NEED NO EDUCATION

ROCK 'N' ROLL HIGH SCHOOL [1979]

→ The Ramones' fast-and-fun ethos is all over the cartoonishly simple plot here, as they help giggly vixen Riff Randell (P.J. Soles) rise up against her stodgy principal. It's goofy and shlocky, but surprisingly wholesome—and a reminder that no matter what the decade, there's no greater social liberator than loud music and tight jeans.

Best musical moment: Randell spinning "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker" over the school PA, nearly causing a riot before the credits begin. (03:59)

Did you know? The film was originally offered to Cheap Trick.

60

DICK MOVES

PLASTER CASTER [2001]

→ While the typical groupie is content to fettle her favorite rock star, Cynthia Plaster Caster took fandom to a new level, famously producing plaster molds of band members' members. This doc shows the doty Chicago artisan, now well into her 50s, still immortalizing local musicians as she readies her first-ever gallery exhibit.

Best musical moment: The Demolition Doll Rods' guitarist earns his way into Cynthia's display case with a behind-the-back solo. (39:30)

Did you know? Jimi Hendrix had an enormous cock.

59

WHISKEY A-GO-GO

LAUREL CANYON [2003]

→ Reversing her hopelessly square role in *Almost Famous*, Frances McDormand is Jane, a free-loving, whiskey-swilling rock producer coming to terms with her uptight son and his bookish fiancée. Set in the L.A. hippie enclave that birthed a '70s folk movement—you can almost smell the sweet leaf.

Best musical moment: Kate Beckinsale performs an awkwardly hot striptease to Serge Gainsbourg and Brigitte Bardot's "Bonnie and Clyde." (1:25:00)

Did you know? The Jane character was partly inspired by mel-low-rock queen Joni Mitchell.



AXE IS NOW IN A DEODORANT STICK.



AXE IS NOW IN A DEODORANT STICK.

58

BETTE YOUR LIFE

THE ROSE [1980]

→ A film that renders moot the still-proposed Janis Joplin biopics. An Oscar-nominated Bette Midler excels as a scared kid trapped in the body of a boozy, foul-mouthed, voraciously bisexual superstar.

Best musical moment: Just seconds after agreeing not to say "motherfucker" onstage, Midler greets her fans with a screamed "Hiya, motherfuckers!" (4:00)

Did you know? Director Mark Rydell pressured Midler to deliver during the live scenes by ordering the audience of extras not to applaud if she was no good.

57

WHOLE LAVA LOVE

PINK FLOYD: LIVE AT POMPEII [1980]

→ Only a bunch of overeducated Brits could get away with filming a concert in the ruins of an ancient amphitheater. But get away with it Floyd do, showcasing their pre-*Dark Side* canon while director Adrian Maben wisely pays as much attention to the architecture as he does to the Floyds' visages.

Best musical moment: Roger Waters gets it on, banging a gong. (28:00)

Did you know? Nick Mason, who in the movie orders a "fruit pie and cream," would later, for charity, make the world's biggest crumpet.

56

HOLIDAY SPIRIT

LADY SINGS THE BLUES [1972]

→ "This picture is honest," said Motown's Berry Gordy, *Lady's* executive producer, "but it's not necessarily true." Yet while the biopic of incomparable vocalist Billie Holiday may fudge some details of her rocky rise—from scrubbing whorehouse floors to singing at Carnegie Hall—it gets her tragic fall sadly right.

Best musical moment: Billie, jonesing and dejected, belts out her signature tearjerker, "Good Morning Heartache." (1:23:00)

Did you know? Diana Ross earned an Oscar nomination for her portrayal of Holiday but lost to Liza Minnelli.

55

SCARY MONSTERS

ZIGGY STARDUST AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS [1973]

→ Return to an age when Britain's newest hitmaker was a six-foot sex mantis with an orange mullet and—if director D.A. Pennebaker's prying backstage camera proves anything—a leg of lamb in his lunchbox. Also enjoy a blazing show as Bowie retires his "Ziggy" alter-ego.

Best musical moment: Mick Ronson solos at the end of "Moonage Daydream." (27:00)

Did you know? Jeff Beck joined the band onstage but refuses to release the footage.

54

COBAIN CONSPIRACY

KURT & COURTNEY [1998]

→ Nick Broomfield's documentary has no agenda past poking around the debris of Kurt Cobain's death—until Courtney Love gets word of the project. Then the film's funding vanishes and it becomes a biting portrait of the widow. Among a parade of interviewees, insight comes from supposed would-be Cobain assassin El Duce and Love's brutish father, Hank Harrison.

Best musical moment: A 2-year-old Cobain singing the Monkees' theme tune. (04:00)

Did you know? Courtney Love tried for the role of Nancy Spungen in *Sid and Nancy*.

53

DETROIT SOUL CITY

STANDING IN THE SHADOWS OF MOTOWN [2002]

→ The 13 session musicians known as the Funk Brothers were the house band for Motown Records, but never enjoyed the acclaim the label's singers, songwriters and producers did. So these guys must be bitter, right? Hardly. Centered on a 2000 reunion concert, the surviving musicians are grateful for the chance to tell their story.

Best musical moment: Bootsy Collins fronts the Bros. on "Do You Love Me?" (00:26)

Did you know? The Funk Brothers played on more No. 1 singles than the Beatles, Elvis and Beach Boys ... combined.

52

CAR WARS

AMERICAN GRAFFITI [1973]

→ Before he got caught up with Wookiees, George Lucas crafted this ode to the suburban car culture of early-'60s California and, in doing so, changed the way rock music was used in movies. Nearly every cut introduces a new song, and Lucas even wrote specific songs into the script.

Best musical moment: Del Shannon's "Runaway" plays over shots of cruising muscle cars. (10:00)

Did you know? The reason Lucas wrote so many pop songs into the script? He couldn't afford an original score.

51

NOW IN SMELL-O-VISION!

WOODSTOCK [1970]

→ Performances include star turns by the Who, Santana and Hendrix, shot with such you-are-there, cinema vérité verve, you'll swear you could smell the stink of the 450,000-plus hippies and rock stars gathered in upstate New York in 1969.

Best musical moment: Joe Cocker's gospel cover of "With a Little Help From My Friends" tears the metaphorical roof off Yasgur's Farm. (1:18:00)

Did you know? The concert, named for the upstate town Dylan and The Band lived in, actually took place 70 miles away in Bethel, New York.

50

REGGAE TOWN

THE HARDER THEY COME [1973]

→ In which Jamaican country bumpkin Ivan comes to the city to make it as a singer but turns to crime. Shot on location in the poverty of West Kingston, this "reggaesploitation" movie is crude but powerful; the soundtrack (Jimmy Cliff, the Maytals) broke reggae in the U.S.

Best musical moment: Ivan (Cliff) strikes cowboy poses while Desmond Dekker's "007 (Shanty Town)" plays. (1:21:48)

Did you know? It's based on real-life '50s gangster Ivanhoe "Rhygin" Martin, who became a folk hero after evading Jamaican cops for months.

I-and-I heartily recommend this film and ting.



PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY

PERRY HENZELL

Also starring

CARL BRADSHAW • JANET BARTLEY • RAS DANIEL HARTMAN
WINSTON STONA • BASIL KEANE • BOBBY CHARLTON



The *O Brother* guys accidentally glimpse John Goodman shirtless.

49

KNOW YOUR CLASH

WESTWAY TO THE WORLD [2001]

→ Don Letts's no-frills making-the-band doc is exceptional in that the band being made is the Clash. Joe Strummer, Mick Jones and Paul Simonon recall the band's rise and acrimonious burnout with more humor than bile. The plentiful and furious live footage proves that today's Warped Tour punkers may have captured the Clash's look, but not much else.

Best musical moment: If we must choose, the rolling-thunder intro to "I Fought the Law." (46:00)

Did you know? Letts played in Jones's post-Clash band Big Audio Dynamite.

48

BATTLE OF THE BANDS

URGH! A MUSIC WAR [1981]

→ The ambitious, globe-trotting *Urgh!* was like a cinematic starter's guide to punk and new wave, featuring sets by both decade-defining bands (the Police, Devo) as well as one-offs that would stump even the most in-the-know college-radio DJ (Skafish? The Alley Cats?).

Best musical moment: XTC bar-beling through "Respectable Street"—just months before they'd forever retire from playing live. (27:00)

Did you know? *Urgh!* marks the screen debut of X's John Doe, who would go on to star in *Boogie Nights* and *Wyatt Earp*.

47

BREAST IN SHOW

BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS [1970]

→ A deadpan satire written by Roger Ebert and directed by exploitation king Russ Meyer. Kelly and her sexually liberated, top-heavy handmates find debauchery in L.A. courtesy of psychotic Elizabethan manager "Z-Man" Barzell.

Best musical moment: Strawberry Alarm Clock perform "Incense and Peppermints" while Z-Man crows, "This is my happening, and it freaks me out!" (13:00)

Did you know? Z-Man is reportedly based on Phil Spector.

46

BACK ON THE CHAIN GANG

O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU? [2000]

→ Three chain-gang fugitives record a bluegrass song for cash in hand that becomes the hit of Depression-era Mississippi. Based on Homer's *The Odyssey*, the Coen Brothers' caper showcases a T Bone Burnett-curated soundtrack, creating a year-long sales spike for American roots music.

Best musical moment: George Clooney performs "I Am a Man of Constant Sorrow" and hillbilly-dances in a false beard. (01:21:00)

Did you know? Clooney rehearsed the song himself for weeks before the decision was made to dub his performance.

45

SMELLS LIKE A DOCUMENTARY

HYPE! [1996]

→ Soundgarden and Pearl Jam are among the subjects of this documentary filmed at the height of the "Seattle Sound." Recalling a time when threadbare flannel was the acme of poser fashion, what could have been an embarrassing testament to rock arrogance instead becomes a funny cautionary tale about the perils of, well, hype. Ends with the prophetic title "Your Town Is Next."

Best musical moment: Nirvana perform "Smells Like Teen Spirit" live for the first time. (35:00)

Did you know? Mudhoney singer Mark Arm, interviewed in the film, is one of many to lay claim to the term "grunge."

44

PARTY TIME!

WAYNE'S WORLD [1992]

→ Not! Excellent! Schwing! Sphinctersayswhat? This *SNL* sketch turned feature film didn't just pay hilarious homage to basement-dwelling suburban metalheads everywhere—it created its own lexicon. Co-written by and starring a pre-*Austin Powers* Mike Myers as a sweetly prankish public-access TV hero, *Wayne's World* is—with the exception of *The Blues Brothers*—the only *SNL* spinoff that doesn't totally hurl.

Best musical moment: Wayne & co. sing Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" in a flame-painted '76 AMC Pacer. (05:00)

Did you know? *Wayne's World* was shot in only 34 days.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE ...

"SID RIPPED IT UP"

DIRECTOR JULIEN TEMPLE ON SID VICIOUS'S BULLET-SPRAYING VERSION OF "MY WAY" IN *THE GREAT ROCK N ROLL SWINDLE*

→ "IT WAS EMBLEMATIC of punk to take this very earnest song sung by Frank Sinatra, this very sentimental rendition of someone's life, and give that to Sid, who ripped it up and patched it back together again in his own way. The idea originally was for him to sing Edith Piaf's "Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien," but I don't think there was any way he was going to do a French song! [Renegade B-movie director] Sam Fuller was the inspiration for shooting the audience. There's that great Sam Fuller quote to the effect that the audience watching a movie should feel that there are actually guns behind the screen. So the scene largely came about by chance, which is the greatest ally you can have in the creative process."



Sid Vicious, uncharacteristically violent.

43

PRETTY EXCELLENT

THE GREAT ROCK N ROLL SWINDLE [1980]

→ Nazis. Bewildered dwarves. It's hardly your average rock doc—but then the Sex Pistols were hardly average subject matter. Johnny Rotten had quit, so manager Malcolm McLaren moved stage center, explaining the film's Situationist vibe and the time devoted to his "Rules" ("Call all hippies 'boring old farts'—and set them on fire!").

Best musical moment: Sid Vicious performs "My Way"—and opens fire on the audience. (1:22:00)

Did you know? McLaren originally wanted boobie-obsessed auteur Russ Meyer to direct.

42

LIPS SERVICE

THE FEARLESS FREAKS [2005]

→ What sets this apart from the standard bio is that director Bradley Beesley has been filming his Oklahoma neighbors the Flaming Lips since 1991. So while the story, in which local oddballs become nationally renowned oddballs, isn't exceptional, the candor is. Case in point: Steven Drozd shoots up—on camera.

Best musical moment: The band is accompanied onstage by a revving, exhaust-spewing motorcycle. (14:00)

Did you know? Beesley is also working on the Lips' *Christmas on Mars* feature.

41

ART ROCKS

WILD STYLE [1982]

→ Graffiti artist Lee Quiñones stars in this no-budget look at the moment when hip-hop leapt from the railyards of the South Bronx to the art galleries and clubs of downtown Manhattan. With music by Fab 5 Freddy and Blondie's Chris Stein, there's eye-popping '80s fashion, breakin', rhymin' and scratchin' galore.

Best musical moment: The freestyle battle between rival crews the Cold Crush Brothers and the Fantastic Five. (25:00)

Did you know? Nas sampled *Wild Style*'s theme song and dialogue for "The Genesis," the first track on his debut album.

40

THERE'S A RIOT GOING ON

WATTSTAX [1973]

→ This "Black Woodstock"—commemorating the seventh anniversary of the Watts riots—would be priceless if it were merely footage of Stax greats like Isaac Hayes, but performance-framing interviews with South Central L.A. residents, riffing on the black experience in sincere and often hilarious ways, are what elevate *Wattstax* to classic status.

Best musical moment: The Bar-Kays, in ghetto-fab duds, play "Son of Shuff." (40:00)

Did you know? Wattstax's original ending—Hayes's "Theme From Shuff"—was lost for 30 years.

39

OUT OF SIGHT

RAY [2004]

→ Jamie Foxx's remarkable transformation into Ray Charles did not come easy—he glued his eyes shut for 12 hours a day. But it resulted in a performance that does the icon justice, charting the first half of his remarkable career from fresh-off-the-bus to his trailblazing years at Atlantic, thankfully ending before the Diet Pepsi ads of the '90s.

Best musical moment: Ray and his band perform "What'd I Say?" in concert. (1:26:00)

Did you know? When Foxx visited Ray Charles, he insisted that Charles confess the details of his infidelities.

38

SEND IN THE CLOWNS

RIZE [2005]

→ The invention of an L.A. drug dealer turned clown, the hyper-energetic strain of dance known as krumping resembles someone gamely trying to dance their way through an epileptic fit. Photographer David LaChapelle's examination of the scene is stunning in its depiction of the dancers in full krump—but equally good at framing their hardscrabble lives.

Best musical moment: A krump-off that shames the WWE for entertainment value. (48:00)

Did you know? One of the dancers featured in the film subsequently appeared in videos by Gwen Stefani and Blink-182.



37

THE FIRST WALTZ

NO DIRECTION HOME [2005]

→ While D.A. Pennebaker's *Eat the Document* languishes in Bob Dylan's attic, Scorsese's epic doc is the definitive chronicle of Dylan's ascent and incendiary 1966 tour. As consolation prizes go, it's a doozy—if testimony from The Man himself grows tiresome, Pennebaker's never-before-seen live footage makes for riveting viewing.

Best musical moment: Dylan instructs his band—*The Band*—to play "Like a Rolling Stone" "fucking loud." (3:19:50)

Did you know? Scorsese couldn't bring himself to interview Bob, so Dylan's manager grilled him ... for 10 hours.

36

LIFE'S A DRAG

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH [2001]

→ When Stephen Trask and John Cameron Mitchell took their downtown theater hit to the big screen, fans worried its cheeky, hypersexual take on glam rock would be watered down. Instead, their story of a struggling German punk-rock transsexual became even more of a spectacle.

Best musical moment: The opening credits, in which a cape-waving Hedwig performs the anthemic "Tear Me Down"—to a confused chain-restaurant audience in Kansas City. (00:01)

Did you know? Ex-Hüsker Dü frontman Bob Mould plays guitar on the soundtrack.

Ozzy prepares his trademark shitload-of-cocaine omelette.



35

BAND ON THE RUN

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT [1964]

→ Cynic; Charmer; Quiet One; Clown: The Beatles mint their stereotypes in this terrific romp in the eye of the Beatlemania hurricane. Director Richard Lester was fresh from films with Peter Sellers, and you can hear it in the deadpan, surreal dialogue. Reporter: "What would you call that hairstyle?" George: "Arthur."

Best musical moment: The Beatles burst out of a dungeon-like TV studio as "Can't Buy Me Love" plays. (35:00)

Did you know? The cutest schoolgirl on the train is George's future wife, Patti Boyd.

34

TESTING THEIR METAL

THE DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION, PART II: THE METAL YEARS [1988]

→ Penelope Spheeris's first *Decline* was a serious-minded look at early-'80s L.A. punk, and *Part III* followed '90s squatter-rockers. But *Part II* is still her best, flaunting such starry-eyed Sunset Strip dimwits as Faster Pussycat and Poison.

Best musical moment: Poodleheaded metallers London hilariously fail to burn a Russian flag onstage. (46:35)

Did you know? Spheeris admitted to faking part of a sequence in which Ozzy Osbourne makes a mess in the kitchen.



Ewan McGregor, moments before being ambushed by a giant cartoon Robert De Niro.

33

HORSING AROUND

TRAINSPOTTING

[1996]

→ This darkly comic adaptation of a supposedly unfilmable Irvine Welsh novel made smart use of a knowingly cool soundtrack with cuts from Iggy Pop alongside various modish Britpop mainstays. Despite dealing with junkies, heroin chic is in very short supply here, unless shooting up in a filthy apartment has become stylish since we went to press.

Best musical moment: Renton (Ewan McGregor) OD's to Lou Reed's "Perfect Day." (44:00)

Did you know? Jonny Lee Miller ("Sick Boy") was Angelina Jolie's first husband.

32

HOTEL HELL

I AM TRYING TO BREAK YOUR HEART

[2002]

→ Filmmaker Sam Jones had the good fortune to be around while Wilco worked on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, the torturous release of which became an instant industry legend, as did frontman Jeff Tweedy's firing of bandmate Jay Bennett.

Best musical moment: Differences are temporarily overlooked for a raucous version of "I'm Always in Love." (39:00)

Did you know? Recording the DVD commentary, the band left the room rather than watch one particularly uncomfortable Tweedy/Bennett confrontation.

31

GRUNGE-TASTIC!

SINGLES [1992]

→ In Cameron Crowe's love letter to grunge, Pearl Jam play the backing band for Cliff (Matt Dillon)—vainglorious lead singer with Seattle scene also-rans Citizen Dick ("We are loved in Belgium ... and in Italy") and terrible boyfriend to Janet (Bridget Fonda). A sharp, funny relationship drama with added coffee and power chords but—what?—no heroin.

Best musical moment: Cliff plays an acoustic version of "Hey Joe" on Jimi Hendrix's grave-stone. (11:00)

Did you know? Among various titles that the studio preferred to *Singles* was *Come As You Are*.

30

TIMELESSLY WARPED

THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW

[1975]

→ Richard O'Brien's campy musical celebrating B-movie schlock became, fittingly, a piece of B-movie schlock itself. This gender-bending oddity continues to live on through midnight screenings packed with prop-toting devotees, even if it doesn't quite make sense.

Best musical moment: Meatloaf belts out "Hot patootie, bless my soul, I really love that rock & roll!" giving the movie a jolting shot of testosterone. (42:00)

Did you know? Russell Crowe once played Eddie in an Australian production.

29

PISSING AND RAMONE-ING

END OF THE CENTURY

[2003]

→ While modern punk bands agonize over "selling out," revered forebears the Ramones unabashedly courted mainstream success, to no avail. This appropriately no-frills, bitter-sweet doc covers the Carbona-huffing New Yawkers' fast rise and slow dissolution (due not only to commercial frustration but also because Joey's girlfriend left him—for Johnny).

Best musical moment: The Ramones argue onstage over which of two identical-sounding songs to play next. (23:00)

Did you know? This was one of two 2003 Ramones docs—the other was *Hey Is Dee Dee Home*.

28

HIP-HOP HOMICIDES

BIGGIE & TUPAC

[2002]

→ There are no final answers in this investigation into the two interrelated hip-hop murders. But Nick Broomfield bumbles around among the deceased's bodyguards, childhood friends and Death Row associates until they let vital details slip, culminating in the imprisoned Suge Knight's chilling "message to the kids"—an implied death threat to Snoop Dogg.

Best musical moment: A teenage Biggie freestyles expertly on a Brooklyn street. (16:00)

Did you know? Broomfield received so many "heavy" phone calls from Death Row that his cameraman refused to film the Suge Knight interview.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE ...

"I SPENT HOURS LOOKING AT IT"

ALBERT MAYSLES ON DOCUMENTING THE SHOCKING MURDER OF A CONCERTGOER IN *GIMME SHELTER*

→ "OUR NOTION WHEN we began filming the Stones during their 1969 U.S. tour was, 'Okay, the concert stuff is gonna be great, but there won't really be a film unless something else is going on, but we'll take a chance and see what happens.' We followed them to Alabama, where they did some recording, and then on to Altamont. Baird Bryant was a filmmaker who had the camera that shot the killing of Meredith Hunter. My brother David was with him at that point. It was so much of a scuffle that he couldn't really be quite sure. When the lab processed the stuff I found that material. I must have spent a couple of hours looking at it. In situations like that you're so consumed with not losing anything, of getting it just right, that you don't feel the danger. In a way, I suppose you're at peace with yourself."



Even the Altamont merch table was hectic.

27

FESTIVAL FATALITY

GIMME SHELTER

[1970]

→ Infamous for its footage of the Altamont gig where some Hell's Angels killed a fan—but more remarkable for the hauteur of the Rolling Stones themselves. Their set is weirder still, as a dog walks across the stage, a naked woman loses her mind and—unbelievably—you see a man knifed to death.

Best musical moment: A near-comatose Keith Richards nods along to a studio playback of "Wild Horses." (20:00)

Did you know? Three other fans died at Altamont, including two who were run over in their sleeping bags.

26

TURNER CLASSIC

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

[1993]

→ Angela Bassett is the growling, glittering Tina Turner to Laurence Fishburne's terrifying Ike in the biographical film that snared both actors Oscar nominations. It's easy to forget Fishburne's skintight jumpsuits and liberal use of feathers—the performance scenes stun, as do the vicious beatings.

Best musical moment: A freshly brutalized and weepy Tina Turner stands center stage and aurally savages the audience with "A Fool in Love." (56:00)

Did you know? Whitney Houston was an earlier choice for the role.

25

PERSONALITY CRISIS

NEW YORK DOLL

[2005]

→ Released in theaters this month, Greg Whitely's tragic, hilarious documentary tells the story of the late, mentally fragile New York Dolls bassist Arthur "Killer" Kane, whose disastrous post-band career drove him to alcoholism, depression and a job refilling photocopiers at a Mormon library.

Best musical moment: Kane, clad in a Seinfeldian "puffy shirt," plays with his bandmates for the first time in 30 years. (59:00)

Did you know? Kane's wife alleges that he once "ripped all my clothes off and started beating me with the cat furniture."

24

JAGGERED EDGE

PERFORMANCE [1970]

→ London gangster Chas (James Fox) kills someone he shouldn't and rents a room from reclusive rock star Turner (Mick Jagger). An eye-opening odyssey of drugs and free love ensues; Jagger made his love scenes with Anita Pallenberg more realistic by actually having sex with her.

Best musical moment: Jagger transforms into a menacing villain whose burly henchmen disrobe during the surreal "Memo From Turner." (1:23:00)

Did you know? At a California screening, one studio exec's wife was so disturbed by the film that she became physically ill.

23

WHO'S BEST

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT [1979]

→ Eschewing the usual rock-doc trappings—talking-head interviews, voiceover, any semblance of narrative—neophyte director Jeff Stein relies instead on archival TV and concert footage to tell the Who's story. But who needs trappings when you've got Keith Moon being whipped by a dominatrix?

Best musical moment: The climax of "A Quick One (While He's Away)." (00:57)

Did you know? The explosions that close the 1967 performance of "My Generation" in the film permanently damaged Townshend's hearing.

22

IN STORE

HIGH FIDELITY [2000]

→ Fans of Nick Hornby's beloved rock-novel—about a music nut who has a better relationship with his 45 collection than his girlfriend—prayed that Hollywood wouldn't screw up the casting. Thankfully, John Cusack got the part—and his record-store rants and mixtape love-letters accurately portray a guy ready to grow up but unable to figure out how.

Best musical moment: Bruce Springsteen appears in a dream to deliver advice about exes. (43:00)

Did you know? Cusack's character shares his name with rockabilly revivalist Robert Gordon.

21

CINEMA DU CRUNK

HUSTLE & FLOW

[2005]

→ Turns out the music industry is a lot like prostitution! D-Jay (Terrence Howard) parlayes his pimp CV into a rap career with the help of the skinny geek from *Road Trip* and the fat dude from *Kangaroo Jack*. The premise is saved by Howard's performance, equal parts smarmy and compassionate.

Best musical moment: Howard's babymama discovers a second talent as she belts out the hook to his first single. (1:01:00)

Did you know? In the past four years, Howard has acted alongside Ludacris, 50 Cent, Outkast ... and Mariah Carey.

20

TRUE BRIT

THE LIMEY [1999]

→ Though not a rock & roll movie in the obvious sense—Terence Stamp plays a Cockney thief in L.A. to avenge his daughter's death—Peter Fonda's self-effacing turn as a bronzed, legendary record producer personifies an entire counterculture turned corrupt.

Best musical moment: A party guest tells Fonda, "That first Christopher Cross album really changed my life"—the first time those words have been uttered, on film or otherwise. (37:00)

Did you know? The opening song is "The Seeker" by the Who, a band once managed by Stamp's brother Chris.

19

THE ONE THAT WE WANT

GREASE [1978]

→ Gang violence, teen pregnancy, pastel poodle skirts—what more could you want from a Broadway musical? Starring Olivia Newton-John and a still-slim John Travolta, this winking paean to '50s teenagerdom, with nostalgia as thick as a soda-fountain milkshake, is still the highest-grossing rock movie of all time. In the words of Danny Zuko: "It's electrifyin'!"

Best musical moment: A newly foxy Sandy (Newton-John) shows off her spandex on the sexy, winning duet "You're the One That I Want." (1:41:00)

Did you know? The parts of Sandy and Danny were originally offered to Marie Osmond and Henry "the Fonz" Winkler.

18

TOWN AND COUNTRY

NASHVILLE [1975]

→ Don't let the 160-minute running time fool you: Robert Altman's sprawling movie about country music royalty and the wannabes who both idolize and hate them deserves its lofty status as one of the best films of the '70s. Altman had most of the cast write their own songs, to heartfelt and sometimes comic effect, and much fun can be had trying to guess the characters' real-life counterparts.

Best musical moment: Keith Carradine sings a love ballad to an audience packed with former bedmates. (2:03:00)

Did you know? Altman shot so much footage, there were plans to turn it into an ABC miniseries.

17

PUNKUMENTARY!

HARD CORE LOGO [1996]

→ The downside to Spinal Tap's success was the rash of lame "mockumentaries" it spawned. But the best by far is this Canadian export about a (fictional) Vancouver punk quartet's doomed reunion tour. Featuring a starkly honest and hilarious depiction of intraband strife and the most unnerving ending you'll see in any film, music-related or otherwise.

Best musical moment: The band implodes onstage while performing for the last time. (1:20:00)

Did you know? Real punk band Billy Talent named themselves after HCL's fake guitarist.

16

THEY DO NEED NO EDUCATION

SCHOOL OF ROCK [2003]

→ Struggling guitarist Dewey Finn (Jack Black) masquerades as a substitute teacher and enters his class of 10-year-olds in a battle of the bands contest. A reminder that rock is not really about "scoring chicks" or "getting wasted"—as the children suggest—but sticking it to The Man.

Best musical moment: Dewey sings along to, and acts out, Led Zeppelin's "The Immigrant Song." (59:00)

Did you know? Director Richard Linklater makes an appearance in a photograph of Dewey's old band, Maggotdeath.

15

LIKE A NARCISSIST

MADONNA: TRUTH OR DARE [1991]

→ It's strange now to see Madonna appear in this film, shot during 1990's *Blond Ambition* tour, as a global superdiva rather than a Kabbalist with an English accent. Despite such carefully constructed voyeurism as Madonna deep-throating a bottle for a dare and leading nauseating pre-show prayers with her dancers, this fly-on-the-wall doc perfectly captures the reality of road life: There's lots of time to kill and everyone sucks up to the boss.

Best musical moment: The bed-humping version of "Like a Virgin." (32:00)

Did you know? David "Fight Club" Fincher passed on the chance to direct.





Eminem clinches the battle with the ol' got-something-on-your-shirt gag.

14

ITS NAME IS ...

8 MILE [2002]

→ So Eminem probably didn't have to do much research to play Rabbit, a mic-shy Detroit rapper proving himself in the face of "haters." But while *8 Mile* could have been a sub-*Rocky* showcase but for the rhyming of its star, there's real grit here—in the trailer parks, brawling and loose women.

Best musical moment: The final battle. Rabbit preemptively disses himself, stealing his opponent's ammunition. (1:35:00)

Did you know? Eminem was romantically linked with his onscreen mom Kim Basinger, a rumor he denied: "It's untrue. Not that I wouldn't ..."

13

WHAT ABOUT BOB?

DON'T LOOK BACK [1967]

→ D.A. Pennebaker invents the verité rock doc and Bob Dylan reinvents being rude on his 1965 tour. Scottish Dylan-lite troubadour Donovan is dissed by the crank-frazzled bard, but that's pillow talk next to what the *Time* magazine reporter gets: "I know more about what you do just by looking at you than you'll ever be able to know about me."

Best musical moment: The idiot-cards "video" for "Subterranean Homesick Blues." (00:01)

Did you know? The idiot-cards scene was filmed in an alley only because cops moved Dylan from the original location.

12

CLASSIC JOINT

DAZED AND CONFUSED [1993]

→ In Richard Linklater's 1976-set high school comedy, his cast celebrate the end of classes by listening to classic rock and smoking pot. You don't need to take up to watch this—but, to quote Matthew McConaughey's stoner hero Wooderson, "It'd be a lot cooler if you did."

Best musical moment: The search for Aerosmith tickets begins—with Foghat on the stereo. (1:36:00)

Did you know? Universal suggested adding '90s acts to the soundtrack; Linklater allegedly threatened to visit them—with an Uzi.



WHAT WAS IT LIKE ...

"IT WAS A HARD SELL"

TREY PARKER ON WRITING THE OSCAR-NOMINATED "BLAME CANADA" FROM *SOUTH PARK: BIGGER, LONGER & UNCUT*

→ "THE FILM WAS a hard sell to Paramount: 'It's gonna be R-rated and it's gonna be a musical.' They were like, 'No way.' But our producer, Scott Rudin, really championed us. And he was the one who said, 'I got the guy who can beef these songs up,' [Broadway composer] Marc Shaiman. It's so rare that you actually get put with someone who makes things better. Most of the time you're trying to get them to stop ruining your shit. 'Blame Canada' was a song that fell into place at the last minute. The scene had Kyle's mother saying, 'Should we blame these people? Should we blame those people? No. Blame Canada.' And she just said it. And eventually there was this moment when we all thought, 'No, she shouldn't say it—she should sing it!' And that became the song."



11

DAMN PUNKS!

SID & NANCY [1986]

→ No film captures the polluted existence of punk rock's early days better than Alex Cox's grimy biopic, and no actor has ever resurrected a dead icon better than Gary Oldman. But while his turn as the unstable Sid Vicious is as jolting as ever, the movie's biggest surprise is in its treatment of the doomed duo's relationship. Beyond the sickly environs and ballistic feuds this is, against the odds, a romance.

Best musical moment: Sid slumming his way through a post-Pistols gig, slicked with blood and sweat. (1:14:00)

Did you know? Cox's second choice for Sid was Daniel Day-Lewis.

10

YOU WILL RESPECT THIS MOVIE!

SOUTH PARK: BIGGER, LONGER & UNCUT [1999]

→ Matt Stone and Trey Parker's reinvention of the musical takes their foul-mouthed, misanthropic TV show into an all-singing, all-dancing, all-farting extravaganza that's zippier than *Chicago* and catchier than *Moulin Rouge*. The songs are lewd and crude, but like the MGM classics of old, you can sing along with them.

Best musical moment: The flatulent instrumental break in "Uncle Fucker." (05:00)

Did you know? With 399 cusses, it holds the Guinness World Record for the most swear-words in a cartoon.

9

THE END

THE LAST WALTZ [1978]

→ Just before The Band's 1977 breakup, Martin Scorsese filmed their going-away show at San Francisco's Winterland Arena, which included Neil Young and Bob Dylan. The tunes soar, and *Waltz* looks as good as it sounds: with intimate but unobtrusive camerawork, dim lighting creating a front-row feel and Robbie Robertson carrying himself like a movie star.

Best musical moment: A soulful rendition of "The Weight." (42:11)

Did you know? A reluctant Dylan took the stage at the last minute after a talking-to from famously fiery promoter Bill Graham.

8

LIFE OF BRIAN JONESTOWN

DIG! [2004]

→ Ondi Timoner covers seven years of camaraderie and competition between Portland retro-posters the Dandy Warhols and the Brian Jonestown Massacre; while the Dandys' Courtney Taylor is merely prone to delusions of grandeur, his BJM counterpart Anton Newcombe is batshit-crazy, and Timoner's access to the insanity is engrossing even if you're lukewarm on the bands.

Best musical moment: Anton kicks an audience member, leading to his arrest. (1:39:00)

Did you know? Newcombe now insists the pot bust that ends the BJM tour in the film was for drugs that belonged to Timoner.

7

LABEL LUNACY

24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE [2002]

→ The hilarious and tragic story of Manchester's Factory Records is really British comedian Steve Coogan's movie, as he becomes infamously idiosyncratic label boss Tony Wilson.

Best musical moment: Future members of New Order, Buzzcocks and Simply Red are inspired to musical action at a Sex Pistols show. (05:00)

Did you know? When New Order's Peter Hook heard of Coogan's casting, he claimed the film would feature "the biggest twat in Manchester being played by the second biggest twat in Manchester."

6

ON A MISSION FROM GOD

THE BLUES BROTHERS [1980]

→ Making the leap from *Saturday Night Live* skit to feature-length movie is rough going, especially for characters as thinly drawn as Jake and Elwood Blues. Still, it's the movie's constant flip-flopping between hysterical set pieces ("How much for the women?") and musical numbers starring R&B luminaries (James Brown, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin) that turned it into a classic.

Best musical moment: Aretha's "Think." (1:04:00)

Did you know? The first inmate to start dancing during "Jailhouse Rock" is Joe Walsh.

5

ON-THE-ROAD OVERLOAD

ALMOST FAMOUS [2000]

→ Cameron Crowe drew on his experiences as a teen music reporter for this fictionalized coming-of-age story. Billy Crudup's Glenn Frey/Duane Allman amalgam and Kate Hudson's backstage Betty got the attention, but it's Patrick Fugit's amazement at the decadence of it all that makes you wish you had skipped high school to tour with Zeppelin.

Best musical moment: The band's singalong to Elton John's "Tiny Dancer." (1:01:00)

Did you know? Stillwater's pre-show huddle is based on Pearl Jam's tour ritual.

4

MINNEAPOLIS MASTERPIECE

PURPLE RAIN [1984]

→ In the template for Eminem's *8 Mile*, Prince plays an up-and-coming muso who looks like Prince, dresses like Prince, fondles Apollonia Kotero's ample bosom (just like Prince!)—yet lives with his parents. Lashings of space-age funk, asymmetrical hair and ambisexual pop ensue, loosely linked by a hilarious script that takes leads from the mauve midget's lyrics.

Best musical moment: The opening, extended version of "Let's Go Crazy." (00:01)

Did you know? Prince made Apollonia dump boyfriend David Lee Roth and adopt a candy-and-herbal-tea diet for the film.

3

ENTER REHAB

METALLICA: SOME KIND OF MONSTER [2004]

→ Everything that you could imagine going wrong with the making of an album did go wrong with Metallica's eighth studio album, *St. Anger*... and then some. This documentary captures the whole rehab-entering, group-therapy attending, modern-art-selling fiasco.

Best musical moment: Ulrich plays his father, Torben, the new material. The parental advice: "I would say delete that." (35:00)

Did you know? Hetfield sang "Hell Isn't Good," uncredited, as Kenny bit the dust in *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*.



Kate Hudson's *Almost Famous* character attracts rock stars by wearing a dead llama around her neck.

2

DANCING, YEAH!

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER [1977]

→ Forget the bad jokes about polyester, white suits and platform soles—*Fever* has lasted because it's the ultimate statement of music's transformative power. In everyday life, Travolta's Tony Manero is a Brooklyn goombah going nowhere—but on the dance floor, he's a sex god. It's also the movie that turned disco from an underground cult into a worldwide phenomenon.

Best musical moment: Travolta's solo routine to the Bee Gees' "You Should Be Dancing," immortalizing that silhouette. (00:59)

Did you know? Bizarrely, director John Badham edited the dance sequences as close-ups. Travolta demanded he restore the long shots, which became contenders for the most famous dance scenes ever.



1

THIS IS SPINAL TAP [1984]

THE COMEDIC GENIUSES BEHIND ENGLAND'S LOUDEST BAND CONFUSED AUDIENCES, DEPRESSED ROCK STARS AND MADE A SATIRE THAT WILL NEVER BE TOPPED

➤ The precise moment of a band's genesis—even a fictional band—can be tough to pinpoint. For Spinal Tap, the rock & roll creation of Christopher Guest ("Nigel Tufnel," lead guitar), Michael McKean ("David St. Hubbins," guitar and vocals) and Harry Shearer ("Derek Smalls," bass), it was a sketch for a 1978 TV show. But the seeds were sown four years earlier, when Guest observed an addled English rock band checking into L.A.'s Chateau Marmont.

"The bass player was talking to the manager," Guest recalls, slipping into Nigel's soft-spoken, simpleton British accent. "He said, 'I don't know where my fucking bass is.' 'Where did you leave it?' 'At the fucking airport.' 'You left your bass at the airport?' 'Dunno.' This went on for a half an hour, and I thought, here we go."

"Collectively, we were aghast at what was representative of rock & roll on movie screens in those days," adds Shearer. "We said, 'Why can't anybody get this right?'" A

VIEWERS WHO WOULDN'T KNOW DEEP PURPLE FROM DEEP FOREST STILL CONNECT WITH DAVID AND NIGEL.

cringe-inducing depiction of a never-was metal band embarking on a doomed comeback tour, *This Is Spinal Tap* not only "gets it right" better than any movie ever—*Blender* had trouble finding a dissenting opinion—it's nothing less than the Rosetta Stone of all film satire. ("Spinal Tap was the single greatest influence on *The Office*," Ricky Gervais has said.) An unlikely accomplishment, considering the "mockumentary"—"That's a word none of us enjoy," grumbles Guest—was a commercial flop.

Directed by Rob Reiner, and shot like a real documentary using only a brief treatment as a road map (a method Guest adapt-

ed for *Waiting for Guffman*, *Best in Show* and *A Mighty Wind*), *Tap* is improvisational virtuosity on an unprecedented scale. And while the band's genre-spanning discography trafficks in hamfisted cliché, the characters themselves are nuanced and curiously sympathetic. Viewers who wouldn't know Deep Purple from Deep Forest can still connect with David and Nigel, harmlessly petulant childhood pals whose deteriorating relationship drives the story and whose climactic reconciliation during a par-

ticularly touching rendition of "Tonight I'm Gonna Rock You Tonight" packs more wallop than a thousand romantic comedies combined. But for anyone with even a passing interest in pop, *Spinal Tap* is every bit as knowledgeable about rock history and the machinations of the industry as any movie featuring a band that isn't, you know ... fake.

Lifelong music geeks, Guest, Shearer and McKean not only wrote the pitch-perfect songs for all of *Tap*'s incarnations, including the psychedelic "(Listen to the) Flower People" and the dunce-metal "Sex Farm" but also developed an entire intricate back story for the band, only a fraction of

which is evident in the finished product.

"We didn't know what questions Rob was going to ask us in the interview scenes," Shearer says. "So we all had to be on the same page. In a 'real' movie—one with written dialogue and a conventional narrative—nobody would do this much work."

Further inspiration came from the unintentionally comedic pomp of the Led Zep film *The Song Remains the Same*, while real-life war stories fueled minutiae like the in-studio meltdown between Nigel and David, modeled after an infamous tape of the Troggs arguing. "That was something people who worked in studios knew about," says McKean, the trio's resident rememberer-of-arcane-shit. "We needed those details because in order for the comedy to work, we had to believe it ourselves." Shearer, who hung out with English metal troglodytes Saxon to learn that playing open bass strings allowed for easier fist-pumping, says, "I'm prouder of the stupidity we stumbled into than any of our own inventions."

For all of *Spinal Tap*'s accolades, the movie's ability to depress the likes of Steven Tyler and Ozzy Osbourne—both of whom McKean says found the movie uncomfortably true-to-life—is what gives its creators the most satisfaction. "To bum out a famous rock star," Shearer marvels, "is the best seal of approval you can get." STEVE KANDELL

Spinal Tap: This fisheye lens goes to 11.



GUEST LIST

COMPETITIONS, EVENTS AND OTHER FUN STUFF

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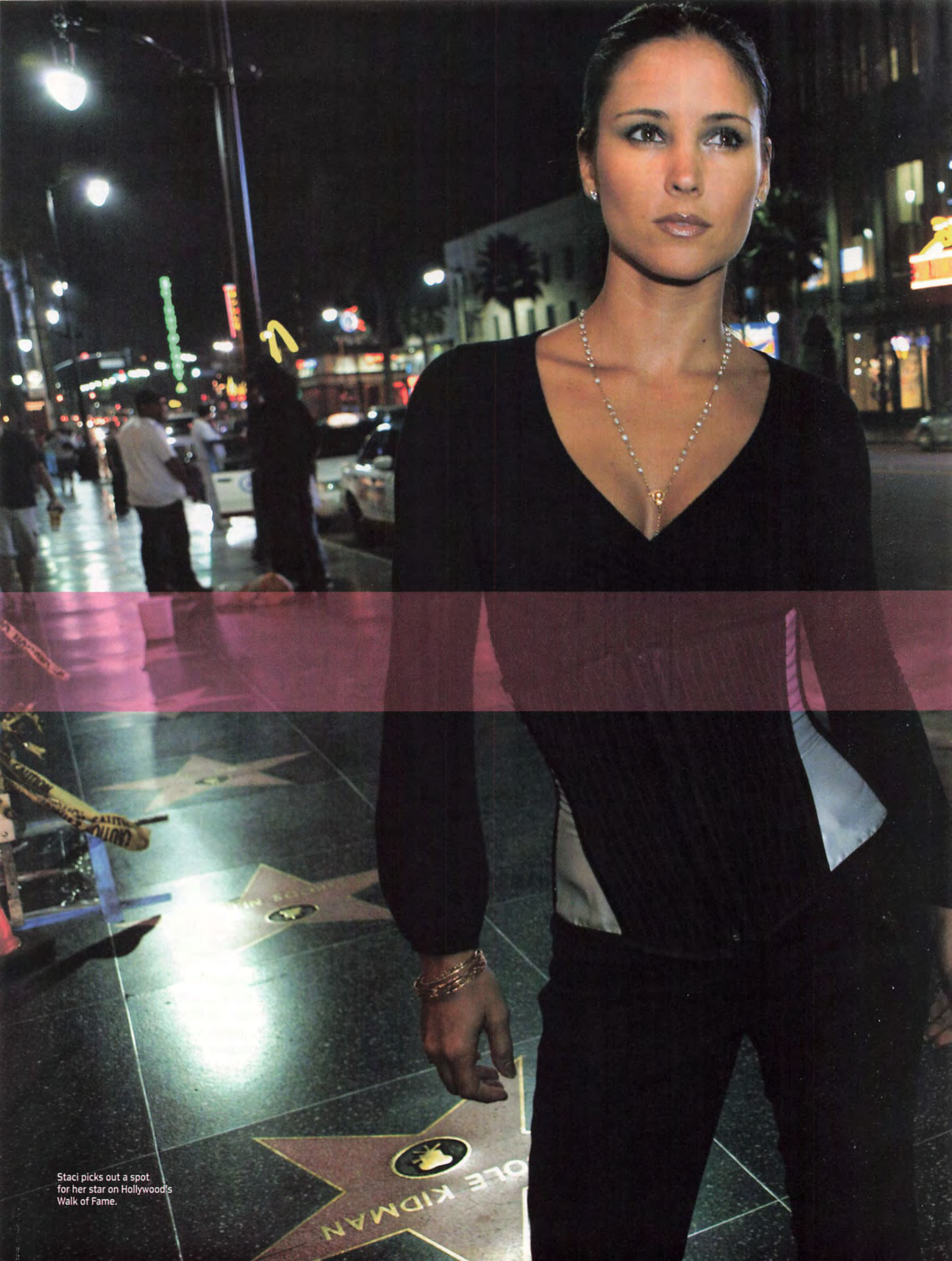
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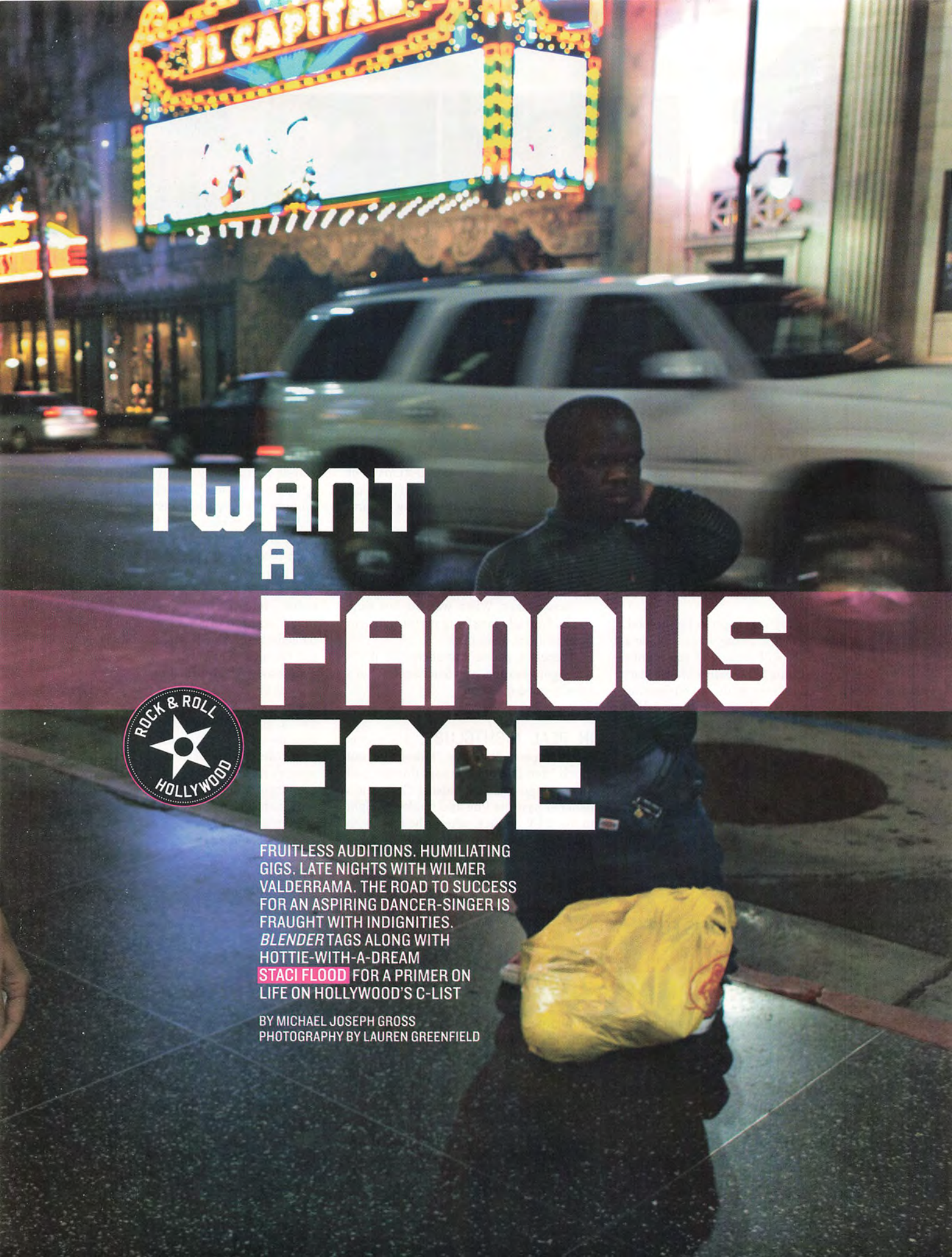
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SMASH ON YAHOO! MUSIC



Staci picks out a spot for her star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame.

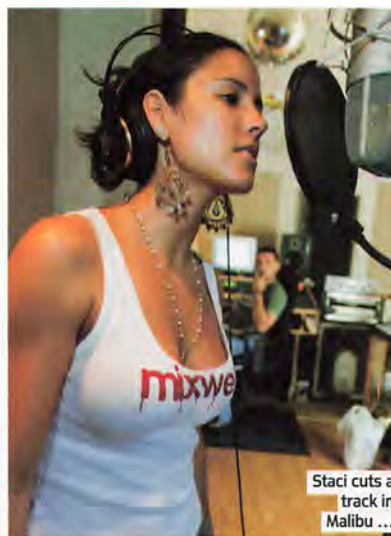
A photograph of a man standing on a sidewalk at night. In the background, there is a brightly lit marquee sign for 'THE EL CAPITAN THEATRE'. A white SUV is parked or moving behind him. The man is wearing a dark jacket and has a yellow bag on the ground near his feet.

I WANT A FAMOUS FACE



FRUITLESS AUDITIONS. HUMILIATING GIGS. LATE NIGHTS WITH WILMER VALDERRAMA. THE ROAD TO SUCCESS FOR AN ASPIRING DANCER-SINGER IS FRAUGHT WITH INDIGNITIES. *BLENDER* TAGS ALONG WITH HOTTIE-WITH-A-DREAM **STACI FLOOD** FOR A PRIMER ON LIFE ON HOLLYWOOD'S C-LIST

BY MICHAEL JOSEPH GROSS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAUREN GREENFIELD



Staci cuts a track in Malibu ...



... while working on her head shots.

IN A MAKESHIFT stage, Staci Flood stands in black spangled panties, a fringed bra, corset, garters, fish-net stockings, long satin gloves and stiletto boots, waiting for her cue to dance. A woman with a megaphone is barking at a room full of extras: "Okay, now this is a fake nightclub, and I want you all to be fake mumbling and fake talking until the show starts."

It's a Sunday afternoon in Hollywood, in a fake nightclub being staged inside a real nightclub (still reeking of last night's beer) for a minor MTV reality show. Staci Flood is dancing with a burlesque-inspired group called the Bombshell Babies, for whom it hasn't been the greatest of days. No one called to inform them that the taping would be starting two hours late; it hadn't occurred to the TV producers that the group might need a dressing room; and everyone keeps mangling their name. "The Bombshell Babes." "The Baby Bombshells." "What are you guys called again?"

Some of these indignities can be

at the screen and smiles. On Sundays, she gets NASCAR trivia questions sent as text messages. "The races relax me," she'll say later. "Just the going around and around, and the speed."

When *Blender* asks how she thinks the performance went today, she says she's pleased, but she can't help noting, ruefully, that "it wasn't a real audience."

Blender asks, When was the last time you had a really satisfying performance in front of a real audience?

There's a pause that seems as if it's never going to end, and Staci says, "That's a really good question."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

IN REAL NIGHTCLUBS, Staci gets more respect. She says "I don't go out much," but Paris Hilton says this too, and when we go to L.A.'s Cabana Club, she's ushered past the line and strides straight to the V.I.P. terrace, where she flirts with *That '70s Show* star Wilmer Valderrama (who dated Lindsay Lohan before she was legal), embraces a steady stream of triple-

But details distinguish her: part Salma Hayek, part *Playboy* bunny, she looks like a Spanish sailor's fantasy of home. Tonight she wears a beater with the neckline cut out, to exaggerate her décolletage, and a brightly colored thong that peeks up from below her trousers' plunging waist. Her hair—a thick, glossy, jet-black profusion that would be the envy of Aphrodite—is covered by a red cloth sheath that's somewhere between Rasta and babushka. (Her ex Justin Timberlake will call the look "Very *Les Misérables*! But in a good way!") The outfit shows Staci's paradoxical style: making sure you know that she comes fully loaded, with every feature that a good-time girl should have—and also always suggesting that she's holding something powerful in reserve. (Even her apartment bears this out: Three icons of the Virgin Mary hang above her waterbed, on which lies a pillow bearing the image of Marilyn Monroe.)

Staci Flood has worked in show business for more than a decade; if you own a TV set, chances are you've seen her—in commercials with Beyoncé and Britney; or in videos with No Doubt, Wyclef Jean and Pink. Yet, unless your fetish happens to be for freeze-frame shots of background dancers, odds are slim that you would recognize her—and being recognized by you is one of Staci's most cherished dreams.

For now, Staci occupies a strange niche in the Hollywood food chain: she is unknown in the scheme of things, but well known to the famous. Walking along the row of V.I.P. banquettes, Staci spies Justin Timberlake and waves. Immediately he comes running like a collie; then he starts acting weird. The closer Timberlake comes to Staci, the more he acts like he's far away. He takes tiny baby

UNLESS YOUR FETISH IS FOR **FREEZE-FRAME SHOTS OF BACKGROUND DANCERS**, ODDS ARE SLIM THAT YOU WOULD RECOGNIZE STACI.

chalked up to the fact that their star member, Carmen Electra, isn't in town to perform with them today. Even so, Flood, who dances with the Babies as a money-making gig while she works on launching a solo singing career, might be forgiven for wondering if that old cliché is wrong: Maybe life really is just a dress rehearsal.

After the taping, on the drive back to her apartment in the San Fernando Valley, Staci's cellphone beeps: She looks

extra-large, off-duty celebrity bodyguards with names like Monster and Big Rob, and swaps text messages with a friend who, every 15 minutes, promises to be here in five. On first glance, you might dismiss her as just another singer-dancer-actress-model who—take a number—wants to be a pop star. *Blender* asks one of her bodyguard buddies, How is Staci different from the rest of these girls? He doesn't miss a beat: "She's *hotter*."



Carmen Electra endures "boob drama," fronts the Bombshell Babies in Miami.

steps, pretends he's on a tightrope, fakes like it's a giant leap down to where she's standing—the true distance is maybe two feet—and finally gives the girl a hug.

Staci first worked with Justin when she danced in 'N Sync's "Pop" video; in his "Rock Your Body" video, she graduated from chorus girl to being the primary object of his desire; and they dated after his breakup with Britney Spears. (Staci won't comment on this particular dalliance. But since she also dated Enrique Iglesias, when she starred in his "Bailamos" video, and Cris Judd, after his divorce from J. Lo, *Blender* has to ask, Is there a pattern here? Staci answers with an anecdote. "This one guy at a club came up to me and said, 'Why don't you date guys at your own level?' And I said, 'Muthafucka, I do.'")

Blender tells Timberlake that we're writing a story on Staci, and when he asks, in the nicest possible way, "What for?," we explain: This is the story of a Hollywood striver, a report from the occasionally exhilarating, usually excruciating verge (of the verge) of stardom.

Timberlake, surprised, says, "I've never read a story like that before," and looks at Staci as if he's pondering what her life is really like.

The empathic moment passes. Timberlake throws his arm around her and enthuses "You found the right girl!" and "I've known Staci for a lotta years!" and "Staci's awesome!"

Blender hopes for something a little

more specific. We ask Timberlake what exactly makes this girl so awesome, but he grins and gives a friendly, hollow brush-off: "No, no, no, no, no. Let's cut me outta this, cool?"

Staci keeps on smiling through the snub, but a cloud of disappointment seems to drift across her brow, suggesting some of the hard truths of her life.

The distance between her world and Justin's—between the strivers and the stars—is both negligible and immense. *No, no, no, no, no* is the wall that separates these worlds; *yes* is the only bridge between them; and how she'll get from here to there is anybody's guess.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

STACI, LIKE EVERY other hopeful in fame's waiting room, is racing against time. She gasps to hear that one publication pegs her age at 30; she sighs with relief when told another claims she's 27. She says, "In this town, age gets a little fuzzy once you pass 25," but hers has been fuzzy since way back. Staci first lied about her age when she left home at 16, passed herself off as 18, and nabbed the role of Pepé Le Pew in a traveling Warner Brothers show. "I played Madison Square Garden when I was 16 years old," she says. "That was *hot*."

After she doffed that skunk costume for the last time, Staci headed home to Morgan Hill, California, a suburb of San Jose, to finish high school, then spent a →



HOLLYWOOD SURVIVAL GUIDE

WHILE WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED, YOU'RE GONNA NEED TO PAY THE RENT. CLIP AND SAVE THIS HANDY CRIB SHEET, AND THANK US WHEN YOU'VE MADE IT!

CATERING

If you can't throw back pigs-in-a-blanket at swanky Bel Air pool parties, you may as well hand them out for \$10 to \$14 an hour. Caterer-to-the-stars the **PARTY STAFF** (partystaff.com) hires aspiring starlets to serve at power-packed soirées where they'd otherwise be unwelcome.

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JON GUZIK

The Bombshell
Babies limber up
in Miami ...



few years working in her mother's hair salon, teaching dance and generally "going crazy" at the deferment of her dream. "I kept trying to save up money, but I finally said, I have to go." From earliest childhood—when Staci would take off her shirt "just like my dad" to work in the backyard, and sometimes sing Kenny Rogers songs to entertain him—she's never wanted to be anything but a performer. Back in Hollywood, she enrolled at Los Angeles City College, majoring in business, but dropped out two years later to perform full-time. Though singing was always her main goal, and she performed with several girl groups, dancing gigs were easier to score, and "You know, I have to pay my rent."

She toured Europe dancing backup for Will Smith, joined a circus in Japan for seven months, did the tango as a zombie on *The X-Files* and, fatefully, became an original member of the well-connected burlesque troupe the Pussycat Dolls. In 2003, when the Dolls' founder, Robin Antin, formed a partnership with Interscope (a deal that led to this summer's No. 1 single "Don't Cha" and the album *PCD*), Staci decided "the direction they were going in conflicted with my music. It was a cabaret before, and it turned into"—she shudders—"the Spice Girls."

"You get one shot to come out," she explains. "To come out of the box, out of your corner, screaming and kicking. So I couldn't let somebody else, or somebody else's vision, make a bad move for me."

After splitting with the Dolls, Staci got a solo deal with Rize Entertainment that soon went south. She signed last year with Rondor/Universal Music Publishing, and, with some guidance from that company, she's been recording demos with writers and producers including Balewa Muhammad, who co-wrote Christina Aguilera's "Dirty." Kevin Hall, Rondor's head of urban music, says he



... so no one
pulls a hammy.

envisioned marketing Staci as "someone with a sensual but strong voice, like Sade or Joni Mitchell, but with the energy or glamour of—I don't want to say J. Lo." He also imagines she'll have great appeal to the Latin market, "Like, well, you know, again, I don't want to say J. Lo ..."

Staci describes her sound as "Lauryn Hill meets Gwen Stefani meets Nelly Furtado." She doesn't talk about becoming a star—only "an artist." She says, "Making it" is not my ultimate goal. Making *music* is my goal. That's what I was placed on this earth to do." She also points to a penthouse apartment one night and says, "I want to live there someday." She wants to have cred, but walk the red carpet—to be cool but successful—and to exploit multiculturalism to full commercial effect.

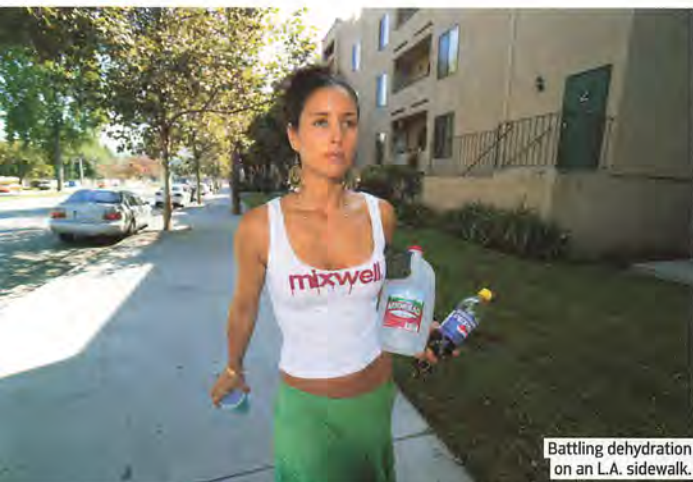
Her vision of success is refreshingly old-fashioned. She forswears the standard starlet's botox and boob jobs ("God made me the way he likes me."), and her name has been the same since the day she was born. She says she's not interested in competing on a reality show; she doesn't watch *American Idol*. "It's awful, the negativity, the way they cut people up. It's disturbing to me that everyone enjoys that so much." Nor does she have much faith in such programs' judges. Of Nigel Lythgoe, the Simon Cowell knockoff on this summer's hit *So You Think You Can Dance*, she says, "He choreographed the Muppets. The fuckin' Muppets! They don't even have feet."

Though she seems almost never to be idle, there aren't many constants in her

schedule. To keep in shape, she swims every day; she goes to a few commercial auditions per month (and gets cast in about a half-dozen per year); when the Bombshell Babies perform she rehearses with them, choreographs routines and makes their costumes. Other videos and live performance opportunities seem to float her way about once a week. She hasn't been on a date in six months, "And before that one, it was a year and a half," because "I don't want casual piddly bullshit, and there's not a lot of men capable or willing to go beyond that." She says this is a productive misfortune: "Hurt is very—you have to get it out. You have to release it. Otherwise it will eat you up. That's when I write most."

Her insomnia keeps her from sleeping more than four hours a night, so she watches a lot of *Law & Order* and *Jeopardy!* She prays "All day long. Whenever it strikes me. I pray that I am on the right path and that I am making the right moves and the right decisions, and, you know, for constant guidance." She is devout but not pious, and talks about God in the slightly hesitant tone one uses for discussing those relationships that other people might not understand. (The same color creeps into her voice when she lists the hottest NASCAR drivers: "Matt Kenseth. Also Dale Jr. And Kasey Kahne ...")

When she wonders why her big break is so long in coming, she usually answers the question in religious terms: "I just always remember that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing." Her mom, Beth Weaver, who won a bout with non-



Battling dehydration on an L.A. sidewalk.



Battling split ends in a Miami hotel room.

Hodgkin's lymphoma last year, is ready for providence to do some explaining: "I know God doesn't open up the sky and drop 10 million dollars on your carpet. But I do not understand this part of the industry: What does it take for someone to see someone else as a whole person?"

Her manager, Melissa Dishell, likes to use a somewhat different analogy to describe Staci's need: "I have an artist willing to bust her ass day and night to get to where she's going. We just need somebody to pick us up in the car. Sometimes it feels like we're hitchhiking: *Pull over. Let us in.*"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

IN MID-AUGUST, after a late-night, high-concept video shoot for the country band Big & Rich ("I was a mechanic, or really a pit whore, and we were partying, and then we got beamed up to a space ship and had to fix something ..."), Staci drives to Malibu for a six-hour session with 22-year-old producer Julian Bunetta. His main claim to fame is one track with Hilary Duff, and his dad, Peter Bunetta (a producer whose hits include Patti LaBelle's "New Attitude") has a recording studio at home that Julian can use anytime he wants.

This afternoon, he and Staci wrap up a Spanish-language love song, with Julian coaxing Staci to have more confidence in her voice's upper register. (She's less a belter than a whisperer.) They finally get the job done, but perhaps because they're not working for money, their collaboration is so leisurely that it seems a bit like playing house. On a break, Julian asks her, "Can you French braid my hair?"

When they're finished, Peter Bunetta wanders in and asks to hear the track, called "Arriba." He's jazzed. "It's got an intensity to it, but relaxed," he says. "It's smart, sexy, classy. There's a NASCAR thing to it, but in a Latin way. You're get-

ting the blueprint for the sound, the plan for the house. This is the formula."

He suggests adding a chorus to the song, in English, "to give it more of a crossover feel, like Shakira."

Staci, who finds it almost impossible to sit still, is using Photoshop to retouch digital images of her headshots on her laptop while listening to the Bunettas' feedback. She nods in agreement, flicking the mouse back and forth, erasing fly-away hairs.

Bunetta asks, "Could you do an interview in Spanish?" he asks.

"Mostly," she says.

"Be sure you tell people that."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

PERFORMING WITH THE Bombshell Babies—all but one of whom are left over from the original litter of Pussycat Dolls—is Staci's steadiest work. Their style might best be described as Faux-Ironic-Piece-of-Ass, and yet Staci, even while waving her goods all over creation, conveys a powerful, almost uncanny presence. She offers herself as fodder for your

crew asks what the Babies are about, and one answers, "We're trying to bring burlesque to the next"—she pauses, searching for the right word—"generation?"

Staci interrupts, portentously: "The next century."

As a Bombshell Baby, Staci also suffers from what *Blender* will call the Carmen Electra Complex. At a recent event where the group appeared without the *Baywatch* babe, they were introduced as "Carmen Electra's backup dancers," which, last time we checked, was right next to "Tom Cruise's wife" on the list of most humiliating roles in show business.

On the other hand, because Electra is famous, she brings the group opportunities to perform—"And every performance matters, because you never know who could be in the audience," Staci's manager says hopefully.

Some of the Bombshell Babies had the vague idea that this year's MTV Video Music Awards weekend in Miami could be a turning point. They were hired to perform at a party hosted by, among others, Kanye West, and were promised by

THE BOMBSHELL BABIES' STYLE MIGHT BEST BE DESCRIBED AS

FAUX-IRONIC-PIECE-OF-ASS.

fantasies, and at the same time, marks herself as inviolable by flaunting the repose at her character's core.

But the Babies are, to put it mildly, a logistical nightmare. One dancer lives in a time zone unto herself; their management returns calls sporadically; and no one seems quite sure how to define the group's ambitions. On this last point, Staci says, "We're pretty much down for whatever. We do shows. Here and there. We did this all-star event in Atlantic City. Super Bowl party in Jacksonville. MTV Australia. Whatever." Another day, a TV

party organizers that the revelers would include lots of industry heavyweights. All month, whenever she was feeling low, Staci would look forward to the trip.

Then hurricane Katrina appeared, and Staci had to ask herself, *Is it worth braving a hurricane to dance for Kanye West in my underwear?*

Well, duh.

The night before the storm hit Miami, Staci stayed up until 6:00 A.M. watching weather reports and sewing her own and Carmen's costumes. At 10:00 that morning she met the Babies for a rehearsal, →



The Bombshell Babies primp en route to a VMA party.

sped into Hollywood to shoot a Pepsi commercial (which, depending on what shots she ends up in and how many times the ad plays, could make her anywhere from \$5,000 to \$30,000), zipped home to grab her bags and caught a red-eye to Washington, D.C., with connection to Miami, from LAX. On the plane, she kept sewing costumes, safety-pinned to the seat in front of her.

The night of the VMA gig, Staci took a stroll through the party before the performance, but she didn't recognize anyone. "I thought everybody was going to be here," she said, taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly.

The group waited in their dressing room for more than two hours, until Kanye finally got there. At 12:45 they were introduced: "The beautiful and talented Carmen Electra and the Bombshells!"

Backstage, they screamed, "Bombshell Babies!"

The show was lackluster. Through a mix of six songs in eight minutes, the crowd was only moderately engaged; the DJ's equipment slowed their music down, which threw their dance steps off; Carmen later complained that she had "boob drama" during the performance.

Coming off the stage, one of their managers actually said, "You guys made it here through a hurricane, and that counts for a lot."



Staci and special friend Justin Timberlake in the "Rock Your Body" video.

After the party, Staci headed to the nightclub Privé, where, on the way in, she met a dancer with whom she'd worked on a video a few years back: "Omigod!" the woman cried. "Staci Flood! I figured by now you'd be a supersta—I mean, how is your career?" On her way back to the hotel, at 5:20 A.M., that question seemed still to be on her mind. Stopping for a bite at an empanada stand, she said, "I don't understand why an audience would be so lame. If you had people dancing in front of you, wouldn't you at least try to be into it? I'm just like, Give it up! You can fucking clap now!"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

AT OUR BEST, we all have a little bit of Staci Flood in us. We hope that we're destined for a better life. We endure indignities for the sake of dreams that only we can see. We trust that we'll be rewarded if we try our best to follow our calling. Staci's way of practicing these virtues is to do things like dance in her underwear for a fake audience in a fake nightclub while trying to ignore the sounds of their fake mumbling. But isn't that a small price to pay for a shot at crossing over from the world you're in to the world you wish for?

"When she was little and we would go to the grocery store, she never walked," Staci's mother says. "She always did somersaults. I said, 'You're gonna get hurt one of these days.' Some people, they're just born with these desires."

The night after the Kanye debacle, Staci followed the other Babies to parties for a while, but she decided to turn in "early," at 3:00 A.M., to save her energy for

ASKED WHY HER BIG BREAK IS SO LONG IN COMING, STACI ANSWERS IN RELIGIOUS TERMS:

"I ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT **I'M DOING WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO BE DOING.**"

But, heads held high, they marched back to their dressing room to change, have drinks and get ready to meet Kanye and his entourage. Staci swigged a Budweiser Select.

Carmen said, "You drink beer? That's so cute."

The party's publicist burst in; she was just with Kanye. "You were awesome! You should have heard him! He said, 'Those girls were off the jinx! Get them up here right now!' But I couldn't get away right then to come get you. Then he left. He was hungry."

After a group groan, Staci didn't seem too shaken. "What can you do?" she said. "You can get all upset that stuff doesn't go how you plan, or you can get on with having a good time."

Diddy's bash the next night. At the club Mansion, she announced that she was leaving, and her friends tried to make her stay. They put their arms around her, hollering in imitation of an audience of thousands: "Staci!" "Staci Flood!" "We love you!" "We love you, Staci Flood!"

Around the corner from the club, she took off her shoes and walked barefoot up Collins Avenue, 13 blocks, back to her hotel. As if on cue, a truck plastered with an advertisement for the Pussycat Dolls' new album rolled by, and Staci laughed at the women's pose in the picture. "Why would they put the lead singer way off to the side?" she asked. Shards of broken glass shone on the sidewalk here and there. She wasn't worried about her feet. She said, "It's hard to hurt me." [BLENDER]

GUEST LIST

COMPETITIONS, EVENTS AND OTHER FUN STUFF

WE THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT



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ROCK STAR POKER

Last August, 32 sweepstakes winners from around the US converged on Las Vegas to play hold 'em against **Gene Simmons**, **Dave Navarro**, **Jerry Cantrell** and **Chad Kroeger** of Nickelback.

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Kroeger finished in 4th place overall and the winner, 20-year-old Jason Vold from Wisconsin, took home \$10,000.

The tournament was sponsored by Las Vegas CVA, Michelob Amber Bock and Albertson's.



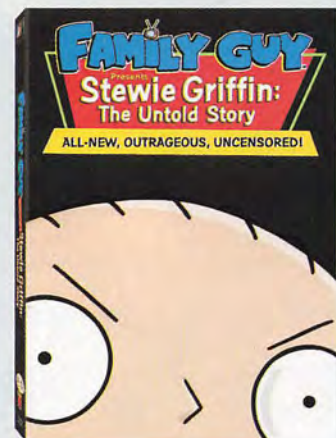
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Drink Responsibly

**128****FIONA APPLE**

Shelved. Leaked. Re-recorded. Brilliant. The crazy journey of Apple's gorgeous third album.

★★★★★

**134****THE GO! TEAM**

This sample-tweaking U.K. pep squad juggle hip-hop, rock and funk on their ecstatic debut.

★★★★★

**144****RUN-D.M.C.**

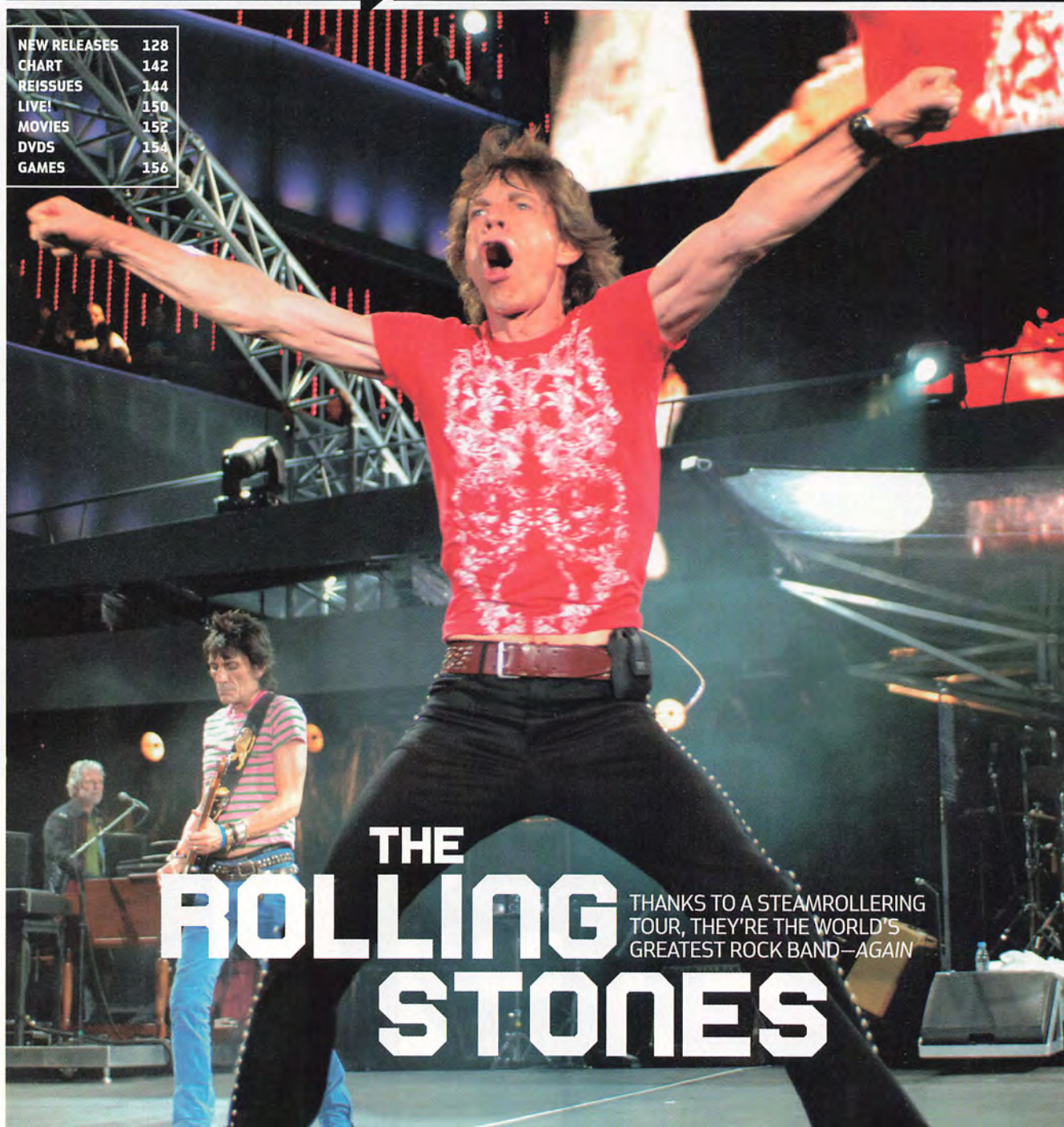
How the world's first rap superstars made derbies gangsta and hip-hop a world language.

★★★★★

THE GUIDE

THEY MAKE 'EM. WE REVIEW 'EM

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THE ROLLING STONES

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FALSE STARTS.
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CONTROVERSY. NONE
OF THEM STOPPED
FIONA APPLE FROM
MAKING A LOVE-TORN
CLASSIC

ONE BAD APPLE



Fiona Apple finally finishes "landscaping the shit" out of her garden.

FIONA APPLE EXTRAORDINARY MACHINE

★★★★★

EPIC

COMPLETED WITH PRODUCER Jon Brion in 2003; reportedly rejected by a record label that had accepted her previous, proudly self-indulgent musical *bildungsroman*, which came with a 90-word title; and finally rebuilt with Eminem producer Mike Elizondo, *Extraordinary Machine* is nonetheless a remarkably pure version of Fiona Apple, simmering with ferocious amounts of nerve, self-absorption and anger. All of which we intend as compliments.

This is one helluva piece of singer-songwriter art. It doesn't shake like Shakira, dither like Death Cab for Cutie or slice like Sleater-Kinney; *Extraordinary Machine* is one of those albums that exist out of time. It could have been released in 1967 (the title song and the chiming "Tymps" are autobiographical artsy pop à la Van Dyke Parks and early Randy Newman), '77 ("Red Red Red" and "Get Him Back" spew punk fury), '87 (the anthemic "Better Version of Me" has a U2-ish grandeur), '97 ("Waltz" is, among other things, an apotheosis of emo), or 2007 (it's going to take a few years for anyone to catch up to the multiple melodies, jazzy tempo shifts and hip-hop-inflected staccato rants embedded in "Not About Love").

Let's back it up. The Manhattan-born Apple, whose 1996 debut, *Tidal*, was a soul-baring-19-year-old songwriting binge that resonated with Grammy voters and at least 2.7 million souls, has both matured and, more remarkably, remained the same. Her following shrunk to 900,000-plus true believers with 1999's *When the Pawn ...*, but a six-figure base is nothing to snicker at, especially given a sales slump that now lets artists debut at No. 1 with five-figure sales. Apple accomplished this while venting against predatory men and pushing an image that was half Sylvia Plath (the isolated wordsmith, hollow-eyed from her alienation) and half Ally McBeal (a waif prone to sudden eruptions of sexy goofiness).

When she built the first *Extraordinary Machine* with Jon Brion, it made sense. Brion, a mixture of quirk-artiste and L.A. scenester, specializes in baroque bricolage that deploys jarring sounds and instruments (his work with everyone from rapper Kanye West to Apple's ex, director Paul Thomas Anderson, includes either actual or digital approximations of tubas, cymbals, accordions and orchestral string sections). This eclecticism jibed with Apple's ear for the (literally) off-beat melody and her long, spidery lyric lines. (It also, according to reports, left her label feeling that the new material wasn't accessible.) Unlike Gwen Stefani, Apple, now 28, is a hollaback girl, not merely exco-rating guys who've wronged her but second-guessing her own motives and emotions ("I think he let me down when he didn't disappoint me" is a typically tricky sentiment).

Apple and Brion-replacement Elizondo haven't done an awful lot of fussing with the original arrangements, if you judge this disc against the original version, which was leaked all over the Internet. They render the opening title cut into a tune that wouldn't be out of place in an early Stephen Sondheim musical, all prancing, ironic, cockeyed optimism about how, despite the fact that she's prone to "seek a new disaster every day," Apple always bounces back through her art.

She goes to a lower register to put a frown

in her voice on he-done-me-wrong songs such as "Get Him Back" (the title's a pun, about both yearning and revenge) and "Window" (better she break one of those, she avers, than "him or her or me"—a novel way to acknowledge a painful love triangle). She settles into a gorgeously languid croon on ballads like "Parting Gift," "O' Sailor" and the scalding back-to-back blasts "Red Red Red" and "Not About Love." Her expansive vocabulary and penchant for pastiche (sometimes she makes it difficult to tell whether she's actually angry or merely satirizing singer-songwriter anger) are by now tools she wields with dexterous strength.

The title phrase is Apple's description of herself, and it's no mere cute boast. Instead, it's raucous proof of how she weathers crises: romantic ones in the songs, commercial ones in her struggle to get the album released. She has already endured a mid-career testing and has been found joyously tough at her very core. **KEN TUCKER**

DOWNLOAD "Extraordinary Machine," "Window," "Red Red Red," "Not About Love"

EXTRAORDINARY HASSLE

WHY DID IT TAKE FIONA APPLE FOUR YEARS TO FINISH *EXTRAORDINARY MACHINE*? THE ANSWER INVOLVES A MANSION, A WEBSITE AND FOAM APPLES. OF COURSE!

JULY 2002: OPTIMISM

Apple begins her third album with producer Jon Brion in a 1920s Hollywood Hills mansion that was once a convent for wayward girls.

MAY 2003: FRUSTRATION

Apple delivers a record to Sony executives who reportedly—as in a Tom Petty song—don't "hear a single." A tentative release date is set for July, then scrapped.

NOVEMBER 2004: GRIEF

A September release date comes and goes. Aggrieved Apple fans create FreeFiona.com.

JANUARY 2005: RAGE

Frothing Apple fans organize a Free Fiona week, protesting outside Sony offices and bombarding the label with thousands of foam apples.

FEBRUARY 2005: MYSTERY

A Seattle DJ plays three songs but won't reveal the source of the leak. Soon, 11 songs appear on file-sharing networks.

OCTOBER 4: JOY

Extraordinary Machine is released. Frenzied Apple fans exhale, go off their medication.

LAUREN HARRIS

THE SCORE

★★★★★

A CLASSIC

★★★★

GREAT

★★★

GOOD

★★

MEDIOCRE

★

FOUL

RYAN ADAMS & THE CARDINALS

JACKSONVILLE CITY NIGHTS

★★★★

LOST HIGHWAY

Ridiculously prolific twangster returns for his second record ... of the year

A few years ago, Ryan Adams was alt-country's boy wonder, a mercurial North Carolina poet of romantic

fucked-up-edness who earned premature comparisons to a Nashville-era Bob Dylan. But since 2003's *Rock N Roll*—a punkish guitar raveup that's also his most consistently great album—Adams has seemed a little awkward in his country clothes. This tribute to his hometown looks to steady the wheel, with no-frills honky-tonk about crumbling marriages, company men and riding the train to bury his pa. Lovelorn acoustic ballads like "The End" and "Dear John" (a duet with Norah Jones) are alluringly spare, with only the occasional slide guitar to decorate them. It's the sound of a New Yorker coming home for a breath of country air.

JOSH EELLS

DOWNLOAD: "The End," "The Hardest Part"

AGAINST ME!

SEARCHING FOR A FORMER CLARITY

FAT WRECK CHORDS

Anarcho-punk quartet suffer crisis of conscience over cleaned-up sound

Florida crusties (and self-proclaimed anarchists) Against Me! built a slob-



Gary Allan wants to know what you did with his hat.

beringly devoted fanbase with the insouciant folk-punk of their first two albums, but on *Clarity* they grit their nicotine-stained teeth and get existential. Hoarse, melodramatic frontman Tom Gabel hollers like Jello Biafra gargling gravel as he contemplates the purpose of his band—and punk rock in general—in the face of corporate greed ("Unprotected Sex With Multiple Partners"), the Bush regime ("From Her Lips to God's Ears [The Energizer]") and looming Armageddon ("Miami"). Against Me! also trade their lo-fi acoustic sloppiness for swift, forceful riff blasts, complete with blustery horns and

macho guitar leads. Just don't call them sellouts, or else they'll riot on your lawn.

AMY PHILLIPS

DOWNLOAD: "Miami," "Searching for a Former Clarity"

GARY ALLAN

TOUGH ALL OVER

MCA

Resilient California honky-tonker looks grimly at life as a widower

Gary Allan's smartly old-fashioned sixth album will generate instant interest among fans sussing out the emotional aftermath of the October 2004 suicide of his wife, and indeed, wrenchers like "Puttin' Memories Away," "I Just Got Back From Hell" and "Life Ain't Always Beautiful" address his anguish. Beyond this, however, *Tough All Over* is a diverse, adventurous disc, whether Allan is applying his appealingly ordinary, thin croak to the sharp-witted country-rock title song or offering a tribute to Johnny Cash. The latter, Jamie O'Hara's "Nickajack Cave," is affectionate yet true to Cash's early-period, screw-you rockabilly attitude—Allan's vocal captures both

OLD WAVERS

Synth-pop archbishops trapped inside their own church

DEPECHE MODE

PLAYING THE ANGEL

SIRE/REPRISE

DEPECHE MODE HAVE been around for a quarter century now, and the doomy British trio's members have not been reserved about their dissatisfaction with the state of the band. In particular, singer Dave Gahan has taken every available opportunity in the last few years to mention his readiness to quit if he didn't get to write some songs on their next album.

He's gotten his wish: Their eleventh album includes three Gahan compositions, one of which ("Suffer Well," whose title he pronounces as "self-aware") is really not bad. (The other two are.) In every other respect, though, the album is a firm backwards step to the style of their circa-1990 peak. Its first few tracks return to the band's core musical strength: lacing silky electro-pop with grimy mechanical noise. "The Sinner in Me," for instance, is a minor-key bubbler that eventually lets its polite mask melt off in a burst of

static, then heat-fuses into guttural, distorted drum 'n' bass for a minute. Musical retrenchment can sustain the album for only so long, though, and its second half drops off badly—the band seem to think that the tonic for a weak lyric is to slow the tempo to a crawl.

Songwriter Martin Gore is also back in familiar territory: "pain and misery always hit the spot," he has Gahan sing, and he's only half-kidding. "Precious," a plea for forgiveness from a divorcing parent to his children, has the sound of classic Depeche Mode. Specifically, it sounds just like 1990's "Enjoy the Silence." Gore mentions God, sin and/or devils in all but one of his lyrics—he's more concerned with theology than any other secular songwriter. And lifting the title and chorus from Blind Willie Johnson's 1930 "John the Revelator" for a song protesting Christianity's exclusive claim to God is somewhere between cheeky and obnoxious.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "Precious," "John the Revelator"



THEIR USUAL TOPICS:
PAIN AND MISERY.

the pious and the hellraiser sides of Cash. The singer overreaches only twice, with the hardboiled macho of "He Can't Quit Her" and the maudlin, six-minute, all-too-faithful-to-its-title finale, "Putting My Misery on Display."

KEN TUCKER

DOWNLOAD: "Tough All Over," "Nickajack Cave," "Ring Ring"

ANIMAL COLLECTIVE

FEELS ★★★

FAT CAT

Hipster hippies who dress like turtles and bunnies release their seventh(!) album

Listening to Animal Collective is like pressing your head to someone's belly and hearing a song slowly coalesce out of the rumbles, squeals and sloshes inside. Composed of four oddly monikered musicians (Avey Tare, Panda Bear, Geologist and Deaken), they make unusual textures, structures and sounds invitingly warm and, on occasion, wildly hummable. Their last album, *Sung Tongs*, made them heroes of the "weird music" scene, which includes consciously outsider auteurs Devendra Banhart and Joanna Newsom. Here, AC embrace pop a hair more than on their noisier past work but still dismantle folk, psychedelia and electronic music with an affected but affecting whimsy. What's most frustrating about them is precisely what's most appealing: Their refusal to write traditional songs, coupled with their giggling nature-child personas, adds an air of mystery and makes for some beautifully offbeat melodies.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "Grass," "Bees," "Turn Into Something"

ATMOSPHERE

YOU CAN'T IMAGINE HOW MUCH FUN WE'RE HAVING ★★★★★

RHYMESAYERS ENTERTAINMENT

Like Eminem with a bus pass, Minnesota rapper is still living medium, still okay with that

Is it possible that Atmosphere rapper Slug, one of indie rap's most popular MCs and co-founder of the influential Rhymesayers label, still relies on public transportation? "Get dressed up, we going out to take the best bus," he exclaims on "Panic Attack." Swagger on a shoestring is part of his shtick, but he's also at least a little serious here: The struggles to get over energize him far more than the perks of minor celebrity. On the road-weary "Hockey Hair," he actually casts post-show blowjobs as soul-crushing drudge-work! Luckily, his love for hip-hop helps him bear such burdens. Good thing, because



David Banner throws one tough Mouseketeer gang sign.

the exuberant boom-bap of "Watch Out" could singlehandedly kick him into a life of limos on call and A-list groupies. Some downscale DIY hipsters just can't catch a break.

G. BEATO

DOWNLOAD: "Watch Out," "Say Hey There"

AUDIO BULLYS

GENERATION ☆

ASTRALWERKS/VIRGIN

British dance music from the shallow end of the gene pool

At least their name is accurate. This British dance duo's second album starts with an ugly chop-and-shuffle of Nancy Sinatra's "Bang Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down)" from *Kill Bill* and then descends into a series of ham-fisted club workouts that make you feel you're being beaten about the head with a sampler. Believing (wrongly) that they can rap, they brag lazily in the slurred voices of London tramps about pills, cocaine and the glory days of British clubbing. A low-rent version of the Streets without Mike Skinner's wit, vision or vulnerability, they're just a couple of palookas mouthing off in the pub. Is this a whole genre of music running out of steam before your ears? As Ms. Sinatra sang: Bang bang, that awful sound.

ANDREW HARRISON

DOWNLOAD: None

DAVID BANNER

CERTIFIED ★★★

UNIVERSAL

Crunk demon hates right-wing Senators, loves the Baby Doll Lounge

On his first two albums, Mississippi rapper-producer David Banner combined fiery political consciousness with unapologetically ignorant down-South belligerence, but his demonic rasp and blaring, chaotic crunk tracks weren't exactly radio-

friendly. Now Banner tries to go pop without losing his edge. The result is schizophrenic: Banner screams "Fuck Trent Lott!" like a Tourette's victim over swampy metal guitars on "Lost Souls" before shouting out to strippers on "2 Fingers." Through most of the album, Banner manages the split pretty well, playing to a different audience on every song without losing his own voice. *Certified* would be pretty great if it weren't for one huge mistake: his suite of god-awful sex jams—including the single "Play," a direct bite of the Ying Yang Twins' "Wait (The Whisper Song)"—a black hole of suckitude placed right in the middle of the album.

TOM BREIHAN

DOWNLOAD: "On Everything," "Gangster Walk"

BLACK DICE

BROKEN EAR RECORD ★★★

DFA/ASTRALWERKS

Stalwart Brooklyn noise freaks score alien abductions on third album

If diabolical Martians with lots of recording-studio experience enslaved a drum circle, their music might sound something like this. Black Dice, who have veered from violent turbulence to primal sound smeared, laced their recent music



Black Dice try to extract their drummer from Hoppy's pouch.

with impending-storm dread. Here they've painstakingly built a seven-track disc of moaned vocals, wavery strums and drones, shrieks and chirps driven by hand-drum rhythms as quiet and capricious as breezes. There are magical, creepy moments here. After four minutes of cottony minimalism, "Smiling Off" happens into a gorgeous, tribal groove with a whistling whoosh of a hook. The citysidewalk freneticism of "Street Dude" is cleaved partway through with humming fuzz but ends cloaked in a mysterious shimmer. "Twins," meanwhile, sounds like a robot sacrifice ritual. Sadly, we cannot guarantee that no instruments were harmed in the making of this album.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Smiling Off," "Motorcycle"

BLACK ROB

THE BLACK ROB REPORT ★★★★★

BAD BOY

Bad Boy vet describes descent from "Whoa!" to jailhouse woe

Ever since he hit with 1999's fast-living anthem "Whoa!," this perennially up-and-coming Harlem rapper has been his own worst enemy, filing in and out of jail with a casualness that's more crazy than gangsta. Free at last, he's released a bulging run-down of the last half-decade. His greasy flow and penchant for detail shine on the pensive "Help Me Out" and the chest-thumping "Ready." "I came to disarm alarms/Grease some palms/Help some dudes bury their moms," he spits on the trouble-hungry "Star in da Hood." But Rob's fiery, ballsy verses and jailhouse cred can't overcome his plodding, forgettable hooks, which prevent him from becoming a star anywhere else.

HUA HSU

DOWNLOAD: "How Can I," "Star in da Hood"

BLOODHOUND GANG

HEFTY FINE ★★

REPUBLIC/GEFFEN

Juvenile Pennsylvania joke-rockers love sarcasm, hate chicks

As an antidote to the flanneled sincerity of most '90s alt-rock, ➔

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THE GUIDE NEW RELEASES

these stylistic chameleons embraced irreverence, cleverly mixing deadpan vocals, *Star Wars* references and seventh-grade sex humor on hits like "Fire Water Burn." For their first album in five years, Gang leader Jimmy Pop keeps that sardonic tongue in his cheek. When he finds the right target, his satire is lethal—the Big Beat hook of the pseudo-techno "Uhn Tiss Uhn Tiss Uhn Tiss" mocks dance music's vapidly while digging its seedy underbelly.

However, the nü-metal and new wave sendups are too conventional to work as either comedy or music—and the nonstop woman-bashing becomes repugnant fast. BG's smart-ass sensibility can be funny enough to bring detention period to life, but their misogyny sure isn't.

TIM GRIERSON

DOWNLOAD: "Uhn Tiss Uhn Tiss Uhn Tiss"

ASTONISHING FACT!

When he was a kid, **CHAMILLIONAIRE's** Muslim father and Christian mother forbade him from listening to any secular music at home.

Just Another Diamond Day, an enchanting obscurity now embraced as a Brit-folk classic. Thirty-five years later, Bunyan returns with a gentle, reflective and often gorgeous album made by a woman with a quavering voice and decades of sincere living under her bangled belt. Some songs are

dangerously twee, especially when the mellotron rears its head, but the presence of freak folksters Devendra Banhart and Joanna Newsome, Bunyan's

furry descendants, keeps things moving. This is an unusually intimate record, an exploration of innocence and experience that goes down like afternoon tea.

ERIK DAVIS

DOWNLOAD: "Here Before," "Same but Different"

CHAMILLIONAIRE

THE SOUND OF REVENGE

★★★★

UNIVERSAL

Houston rapper says all you need is hate

"Seems to me the industry is all on Jigga's dick," Chamillionaire sneers over Cadillac door-slams on the excellent "In the Trunk." While this Houston rapper only comes close to dissing Jay-Z, his feelings about everyone else aren't as vague. His popular mixtapes and well-publicized beefs with former hometown friends Mike Jones and Paul Wall make Chamillionaire the latest Southern sensation to debut nationally. The operatic title track and the Mannie Fresh-produced "Fly As the Sky" capture Chamillionaire's raspy, indignant sing-song well, as do his rugged duets with Bun B of U.G.K. But his single-minded obsession with getting revenge—against cops, scheming chicks, doubters, etc.—wears thin over the course of an hour. It's a dish best served cool, not over and over and over.

HUA HSU

DOWNLOAD: "In the Trunk," "Fly As the Sky"

BLOOD ON THE WALL

AWESOMER ★★★★★

THE SOCIAL REGISTRY

Buzzy Brooklyn noizoids make an ecstatic, catchy racket on their second album

Blood on the Wall are a noise-rock band, but not in the avant-garde, BRZZT—CHGGG—VROWRWHIRRR!! tradition. Composed of a brother, a sister and a friend, the group deals in grooves, hooks and taut song structures; they just play like a junkyard wrecking crew, burying their vocals low in the mix, immersing basslines in fuzz and steeping riffs in—well, okay—some screeching VROWRWHIRRR!! Their most audible forebears are Sonic Youth, for their love of unnatural squall, and the Pixies, for their violent re-imagining of what pop songs sound like. Singers Brad and Courtney Shanks shriek and mumble, respectively, about paranoia, underachievers and girls with eyes that turn into kites.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "Mary Susan," "Stoner Jam," "Heat From the Day"

VASHTI BUNYAN

LOOKAFTERING ★★★

DICRISTINA

Old-school British hippie waif surrounds herself with harp and harmonium on first album since the Nixon presidency

In the late 1960s, Vashti Bunyan abandoned swinging London with a horse and hippie cart and made her way to a Scottish commune founded by Donovan. Her dropout journey inspired the 1970 record



ELIJAH WOOD
ACTOR, *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*,
EVERYTHING IS
ILLUMINATED

GOGOL BORDELLO
GYPSY PUNKS
UNDERDOG WORLD
STRIKE (SIDEONE DUMMYY)

"It's refreshing to hear a mix of gypsy folk music with a punk-rock aesthetic."



Blood on the Wall
camp out early for
"Yanni in the Park."



Jamie Cullum
challenges his name
to a staring contest.

COLDER

HEAT ***

OUTPUT

Quality existential disco is like Joy Division wearing a beret and walking the Champs-Élysées

It's a paradox that dance music often sounds most exhilarating when it's the most bored, depressed or aloof. Legends of happiness-through-misery New Order are hot once again thanks to the Bravery and the Killers, but Colder (a.k.a. Parisian video artist and designer Marc Nguyen Tan) draw instead on New Order's earlier incarnation, Joy Division, the post-punk band whose ability to turn despair into ecstasy has never been matched. *Heat*'s soundscapes are sparse and frosty, the delivery arch and "To the Music" and "Wrong Baby" both transfigure JD's great song of dislocation, "She's Lost Control," for a Paris disco. The tragedy factor might go too far—on "The Winter's Fields," Tan binges Frenchy on the symbolism of dead flowers and skeletal trees—but enough human warmth sneaks through to make this second album exciting and affecting.

ANDREW HARRISON

DOWNLOAD: "Wrong Baby," "Tonight"

JAMIE CULLUM

CATCHING TALES ***

VERVE FORECAST

Young fogey makes New Vintage Pop, asks listeners to dress up and drink martinis

Cullum is a 26-year-old English singer and pianist drunk on energy. With *Twentysomething*, his great-sounding 2004 U.S. debut, he showcased his zeal for jazz, old pop, girls, Elton John-style rock-soulfulness, not getting fat and for finding old-fashioned happiness in an increasingly bewildering world. Everything continues on this follow-up: standards ("I Only Have Eyes for You"), winning extroversion ("Get Your Way"), hometown valentines ("London Skies"), the awareness that bright jazz-pop doesn't cure tears and terrorism ("21st Century Kid"). Cullum is an engaging singer, fluid and idiomatic with some scruffiness left in, and he works from a genuine populist sophistication. This 14-song collection is a bit of a grab-bag. But in this world of, as Cullum tells a woman, "overrated pleasures," vivid bits of this and that can equal real entertainment.

JAMES HUNTER

DOWNLOAD: "7 Days to Change Your Life," "Get Your Way"

CURUMIN

ACHADOS E PERDIDOS ***

QUANNUM

Brazilian singer with Japanese and Spanish parents is ethnically confused, in a good way

Curumin, a young São Paulo musician (real name Luciano Nakata Albuquerque), is a student of 1970s Brazilian funk, one of the most directly pleasing kinds of music ever produced by humans. Getting inside an art this juicy presents a problem: The behind-the-beat grooves, Stevie Wonder-ish singing and Brazilian percussion can fall into →



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The dyslexic members of Go! Team.

PEP SQUAD

Cutie-pie sample-rockers say "get happy"—and you will

THE GO! TEAM

THUNDER, LIGHTNING, STRIKE ★★★★★

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES/COLUMBIA

BACK IN THE mid-'90s, there was a fleeting moment when the future of rock was no longer guys with guitars—it was samplers. Hip-hop had established the use of sampling, and soundbite stitchers like the Chemical Brothers and Fatboy Slim were rocking harder than rock bands, swirling tough guitars into their mix. The possibilities seemed endless. But between rising sample costs, a charisma shortage (Fatboy Slim played second banana in his own videos) and a new movement of white-belted rock traditionalists, sample-rock faded out.

That's one reason why *Thunder, Lightning, Strike*, by the sample-drunk Brighton, England, six-piece the Go! Team, sounds nostalgic. The other reason is content: Their blend of live instruments and unidentifiable (yet familiar) song fragments conjures Motown hits, bubblegum-popping girl groups and a late-'50s/early-'60s era when instrumental acts like the Tornadoes or Les Baxter actually topped the charts.

But there's more. The adorable MC Ninja raps—when she isn't simply chanting

"one, two, three, four!"—à la old-school schoolgirls like Sha Rock and Roxanne Shante, with a jump rope bounce and no poetic agenda beyond crowd-hyping. Meanwhile, mastermind Ian Parton likes weird electric guitars: Parts of "Junior Kickstart" sound scissored out of Sonic Youth's alt-rock classic *Daydream Nation*.

But what does this laundry list of styles add up to? A chop-shop comedy routine, like subpar mashups that combine two hot songs into one useless one? Thankfully, no. When the Go! Team mix surf guitar and spaghetti-western harmonica ("Panther Dash"), or mate a toot-tooting recorder with hip-hop drums and a schizo turntable-scratching breakdown ("Get It Together"), or unspool a smiley jazz-piano jam that sounds like a Vince Guaraldi *Peanuts* soundtrack ("Feel-good by Numbers"), they're not doing it just to impress fellow record geeks, although they will. They're doing it because it sounds so damn joyous. The inclusive feel-good boosterism of their name may be pretty much all they ultimately have to say ("Hold Yr Terror Close" is a melancholy exception). But given how deliciously they say it, that's plenty.

WILL HERMES

DOWNLOAD: "Huddle Formation," "Get It Together," "Ladyflash"

glibness or chill-out vapidness. (See Jamiroquai, another devotee of Brazilian funk, for an example of how to fail in these regards.) Curumin's first album weaves in and out of glibness danger zones. He's a groove-builder, but not much of a songwriter, so whenever he blisses out and lets the spacey funk take over, he's in trouble. When he makes the music itchier and more personal, injecting some rapping, ukulele, digital cut-ups and tambourine breakdowns ("Cadê o Mocotó") he can be original and local, rather than predictable and international.

BEN RATLIFF

DOWNLOAD: "Samba Japa," "Cadê o Mocotó?"

DANGER DOOM

THE MOUSE AND THE MASK ★★★★★

EPITAPH

Highbrow hip-hop pairing for the Cartoon Network generation

It's hard to tell which half of this cult coupling is odder: producer Danger Mouse is best known for a remix album pitting Jay-Z against the Beatles, while rapper M.F. Doom rocks his creepy, comics-obsessed rhymes from behind an expressionless metal faceplate. Given their quirks, this Adult Swim-commissioned one-off is surprisingly pedestrian. Doom's loopy, reference-heavy style is in top

form as he pokes fun at "midgets into crunk" ("El Chupa Nibre") and harmonizes with the Aqua Teen Hunger Force ("A.T.H.F."). But his off-kilter imagery sometimes clashes with Danger Mouse's slapstick, lounge-influenced beats. While "Sofa King" and "The Mask" (featuring Ghostface) mine this tension well, the flimsier moments feel like an overlong break from the regularly scheduled broadcast.

HUA HSU

DOWNLOAD: "The Mask," "Sofa King"

ELEPHANT MAN

OVA DI WALL ★★★★★

VP RECORDS

Enjoy the "Willie Bounce"? Like to "Scoobay"? This dancehall DJ has the album for you!

Between the dismissively absurd and the gloriously over-the-top lies Elephant Man. The Ol' Dirty Bastard of dancehall, he's less an artist than a phenomenon: the outrageously attired "Energy God" whose live act makes crunk seem calm. Ele's fourth album proves him to be more than the sum of his parts. The Energy God cannot: sing, chat ingenious lyrics or (thanks to a prominent lisp) pronounce the letter "s." He can: croak out tunes over the unlikelyst of jacked melodies (from gospel to Gloria Gaynor), extol God and ass in the same set and recite nonsensical

THE CD WE'RE TOTALLY GAY FOR

GIANT DRAG

HEARTS AND UNICORNS ★★★★★

KICKBALL

L.A. duo meow like kittens; outstanding debut ensues

Of all the forgotten microgenres of the '90s—hip-house, post-rock, techno—none is as ripe for a resurgence as "shegazer," an American, female-fronted offshoot of the gauzy, guitar-washed British style shoegazer. Enter Giant Drag, a precious and precocious Los Angeles duo who on their debut uncover the perfect balance of dreamy and creamy, peachy and fuzzy. Front-woman Annie Hardy brings a childlike wonder to spacey, *Lost in Translation*-soundtrack-worthy numbers like "Kevin Is Gay" (with its chorus of "meow meow meow") and the pessimist summer jam "This Isn't It" ("it" = love). Elsewhere—particularly on the downright heavy minor-

chord crunch of "High Friends in Places"—keyboardist-drummer Micah Calabrese makes his macho presence felt, but make no mistake: This is Hardy's show. Anyone who can whisper "Clean me up before California/Dumb boy, I always adore ya" (as she does on "Slayer") and make it sound like the pickup line of the century is free to wrap her pigtailed around any genre she wants. Except maybe for techno.

ANDY GREENWALD

DOWNLOAD: "Kevin Is Gay," "This Isn't It," "Slayer"



Too bad she's probably dating that guy.

When you're Danger Doom, every day is Halloween.



mantras that are actually dance directives—"Scoobay!" "Weddy, Weddy, Weddy!" Laugh at or with him, Ele steals the show.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "Bun Bad Mind (Remix)," "Willie Bounce"

THE FIERY FURNACES REHEARSING MY CHOIR ☆☆☆

ROUGH TRADE

Weirdo New York siblings are the Brenda and Billy Chenoweth of rock



Whether hooky and frisky (their debut, *Gallowsbird's Bark*) or atonal and grueling (last year's *Blueberry*

Boat), this brother-sister duo seem to be making music for each other, in a secret language that shuts out the rest of the world. Now, in the bravest expression yet of their see-if-we-care ethos, Eleanor and Matthew Friedberger have recorded an album with their octogenarian grandmother. *Rehearsing My Choir* sets Olga Sarantos's loopy reminiscences to a semi-spoken-word song cycle. An amusing counterpoint to Eleanor's icy warble, Grandma's booming baritone adds surreal grandeur to her grandkids' neoprimitive noodling (crudely plonked piano, cheap-synth bleeps and gurgles). Not for all—or even most—tastes, the result is abrasive and weirdly haunting, alternately suggesting performance-art cabaret and a children's-hour radio play beamed in from another planet.

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD: "Seven Silver Curses," "Slavin' Away"

THE FRAY

HOW TO SAVE A LIFE ☆☆☆

EPIC

Glum new Colorado band use *Train* and *Five* for Fighting for a sense of roots

Isaac Slade and Joe King, a singer-pianist and singer-guitarist, lead this unsimiling Denver quartet. On a moody mid-tempo adventure such

as "Heaven Forbid," they worry about winding up alone and clueless. They fear they're wildly at sea with love throughout the penetrating mood-swings of the first single, "Over My Head (Cable Car)," and they're afraid they're unreachable, "already gone," on the stretched-out "Vienna." Their major-label debut is produced with rock & roll aggression. But Slade's introspective piano is a constant in the band's sound, punctuating the onslaughts, and the frequently falsetto-ized tenor vocals tend toward the immaculate. The music is all urgent-sounding pieces—emotional lyrics, minor-key harmonies, huge drumming, churning electric guitars, pretty piano, ropy melodies. Separately or in tandem, these things may well grab listeners. But what they add up to remains unclear.

JAMES HUNTER

DOWNLOAD: "Over My Head (Cable Car)," "She Is"

GANG OF FOUR

RETURN THE GIFT ☆☆☆

V2

Recently reunited punk heroes fix what wasn't broke

Gang of Four drummer Hugo Burnham has explained his band's decision to re-record its best-known songs by kvetching that the original drums sounded like "cardboard boxes." But thin production certainly never stopped the U.K. quartet from becoming one of punk's most influential groups, which makes this a puzzling artifact: an ersatz best-of for newcomers and a compare-and-contrast curio for enthusiasts. Overseen by guitarist Andy Gill, the songs are technically stronger—a steroid-enhanced "What We All Want" is now more funk than punk, and Burnham's drums on "To Hell With Poverty" sound like cannons—but Gang of Four's sparse, scratchy imperfections were central to their outsider charm. It's the musical equivalent of George Lucas's tinkering with the *Star Wars* DVDs—some flaws are best left uncorrected.

DORIAN LYNKEY

DOWNLOAD: "I Love a Man in Uniform," "To Hell With Poverty"

GOGOL BORDELLO

GYPSY PUNKS: UNDERDOG WORLD STRIKE ☆☆☆

SIDEONEDUMMY

New Yorkers without borders celebrate immigrant experience, transnational sex

Led by Eugene Hutz, a Ukraine-born showman with a handlebar mustache and a knack for sneered punk slogans, this expatriate collective has invented a mongrel form of world music that is both truly with- ➔



Left to right: Alicia Keys, giant Afro-puff.

KEYED UP

An unplugged Keys ups her emotional ante

ALICIA KEYS

STAND ALONE ☆☆☆☆

J RECORDS

MTV RESURRECTED ITS "Unplugged" series—dormant since 2002—because Alicia Keys asked it to. The network's consent seems like a bad decision, made only to indulge a star. "Unplugged" used to offer a change of pace, a proving ground perhaps, to artists like Nirvana or Jay-Z who rarely let their music go *au naturel*. But Keys and her baby grand are pretty unplugged to begin with. What could the unprocessed princess of piano-and-soul give us on "Unplugged" that she hasn't given us already?

Plenty. The format is a chance to take note of Alicia, over and above the keys. Yes, she plays piano—alongside horns and string sections, no less—but this set, recorded at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in July, is a triumph of vocals: A casual, intimate concert affords Keys the freedom to add emotional intensity to tracks that are emotional landmines to begin with. She oozes sincerity. "I don't care if I sing this song a hundred thousand trillion billion times—I feel that same way every time," she says, introducing "If I Ain't Got You." The original song is an evocative declaration of dependence, but here she belts out

her devotion, no holds barred. And devotion is her domain: Keys seems most herself when she's proudly, confidently holding down her man.

She can also run a broader gamut of emotions: Pain (on a gut-wrenching cover of "Every Little Bit Hurts," popularized by Aretha Franklin), wrath (on "Karma," which sounds fiercer than ever, thanks to blasting horns and frenetic violins), passion (when joined by vanilla soul brother Adam Levine of Maroon 5 for a stirring cover of the Rolling Stones' "Wild Horses"). About the only thing Keys can't do well is shamelessly name-drop—it belies her unpretentious image—but she slips up on "Unbreakable," one of two new tracks. Lyrics like "We could act out like Will and Jada/Or like Kimora and Russell, makin' paper" dampen this tepid love song. It's the only misstep on a stellar set proving one of two things: that Keys's sincerity routine is no routine—or that if it is, the routine is convincing, cathartic and catchy enough to make folks forget it's fake.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "Karma," "Wild Horses," "If I Ain't Got You"

ALICIA KEYS'S CURRENT LISTENING

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Lil' Kim: "Please, warden, can't I keep it?"



SLAMMIN'

K.I.M.: Still notorious, and now creative, to boot

LIL' KIM
THE NAKED TRUTH ★★★★★
ATLANTIC

JUST ASK LIL' Kim—being a hip-hop moll ain't all it's cracked up to be. If you rap badly, people assume you're a sex toy. If you rap well, people assume you didn't write the rhymes ... and that you're a sex toy. Worst of all, you have to remain faithful, meaning, in Kim's case, catching a jail sentence for trying to protect your late mentor/sugar daddy's crew. But while Lil' Kim has always been in the Notorious B.I.G.'s shadow, for a time she thrived there, happy to play his ostentatious, potty-mouthed sidekick, as if fealty to the rap legend gave her sustenance. *The Naked Truth*, though, marks a long-overdue split, not because Big Poppa's ghost isn't here—she quotes him on "Spell Check" and samples him on "All Good"—but because, for the first time, Kim imagines a life beyond homage.

This is easily Kim's strongest work since her pheromone-thick 1996 debut, *Hard Core*, because all of a sudden, she's flexible—artistically, that is. She borrows flows from Bone Thugs-N-Harmony ("We Don't Give a Fuck") and LL Cool J (the prog bellydance number "Kitty

Box"), while "Lighters Up" is sharp, loping dancehall (though in all fairness, Kim's nemesis Foxy Brown nailed this style four years ago on the excellent *Broken Silence*).

On the squiggly "Shut Up Bitch," the Queen Bee compellingly gripes about the scrutiny that comes with fame (or, more precisely, with fame and plastic surgery), but Kim is always at her best on the offensive. Take "Quiet," a rip-off of Eminem's "Lose Yourself" so unlikely and shameless it feels like innovation. In a wheezing voice, Kim sends barbs at Foxy Brown, former homey Lil Cease and, possibly, 50 Cent (the Game raps the hook, as if to drive home the point). She sounds angry, uncertain and, most crucially, alive.

On the moody, slick "Slippin'," though, Kim laments her "public humiliation, poor representation, guilty by association." It's the sound of a woman whose bubble has finally burst and who realizes that loyalty won't sustain her, but music might.

JON CARAMANICA
DOWNLOAD: "Quiet," "Lighters Up," "Slippin'"

LIL' KIM'S
CURRENT LISTENING

KANYE WEST
LATE REGISTRATION ROC-A-FELLA

BRANDY
NEVER SAY NEVER ATLANTIC

out borders and totally New York. The template is Balkan bacchanalia, with riotous accordions and fiddles over an accelerated oompah beat, but the Gypsy rock often veers into Spanish rap, Yiddish cabaret or Jamaican dub. On Gogol Bordello's third album, their first to capture the infectious anarchy of the band's live act, Hutz revels more than ever in his outsider status, favoring the thrill of the culture clash over the assimilation of the melting pot. As he puts it, turning a boozy come-on into a political statement (or is it vice versa?), "Think locally, fuck globally."

DENNIS LIM
DOWNLOAD: "Immigrant Punk," "Think Locally, Fuck Globally," "60 Revolutions"

GRANDDADDY

EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF TODD ZILLA

V2
Trippy Cali foursome bid the Central Valley an exhausted, vituperative farewell

Cosmic indie rockers Granddaddy are moving away from home after 13 years as a band, and they couldn't be happier. This seven-song EP is a vehement kiss-off to California's Central Valley—home to such cultural meccas as Bakersfield, Fresno and their native Modesto—which songwriter Jason Lytle seems to be royally sick of, and whose plastic presence permeates his lyrics. ("There's more ATMs with air conditioning than there are birds on the wing," he mutters.) Lytle's cracked tenor and fondness for antiquated keyboards and sun-curdled harmonies sometimes make Granddaddy sound like a lower-fi Flaming Lips, but they're most convincing on slow, enervated meditations like "Fuck the Valley Fudge," in which Lytle sounds as if he's running on nothing but residual bitterness.

DOUGLAS WOLK
DOWNLOAD: "Fuck the Valley Fudge," "At My Post"

THE (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY

ARMED LOVE

AMERICAN
Swedish rebel-rockers bring Marx to the mosh pit

Even during a fertile period for rock & roll dissent, four straight-edge Swedish Marxists aren't obvious mainstream fodder, but the (International) Noise Conspiracy's fourth album takes the Trojan Horse approach, outfitting their barricade-storming sentiments in muscular, good-time blues-rock, overseen by label boss Rick Rubin. So "Communist Moon," named for a quote from President Lyndon Johnson, packs a



Iron and Wine and Calexico tie for last in the charisma olympics.

rousing punch whether you're throwing a revolution or just a party, and "Like a Landslide"'s cry of "We're gonna move like the movement" tidily conflates dancing in the streets with fighting in them. But the doggedly retro approach ultimately muzzles the Noise Conspiracy's radical bite. While labelmates System of a Down, for example, are incinerating the rulebook, it's hard to sound that revolutionary with a sound that was last current during the Nixon administration.

DORIAN LYNKEY

DOWNLOAD: "Let's Make History," "Communist Moon"

IRON AND WINE/ CALEXICO

IN THE REINS ★★★★★

OVERCOAT

Indie-rock standouts serenade a kinder, gentler and imaginary America

Iron and Wine—the stage name for Florida singer-songwriter Sam Beam—and Arizona collective Calexico both draw inspiration from a mythic American past, but they express this reverence differently. While Beam's handsome whispers and strums evoke a folksy, backwoods charm, Calexico's Latin-tinged desert rock captures the border-crossing flavors of the American Southwest. This excellent collaboration plays to both halves' strengths. Calexico's lazy slide guitar and vibraphone perfectly match Beam's gauzy vocals, particularly on the murky jazz of "Burn That Broken Bed," the surging "A History of Lovers" and "He Lays in the Reins," a gorgeous duet that pairs Beam with the lively flamenco singer Salvador



The (International) Noise Conspiracy, before being crushed by Australia.

Duran. A record that's as wide-ranging as the land it romanticizes.

HUA HSU

DOWNLOAD: "Burn That Broken Bed," "He Lays in Reins," "Dead Man's Will"

I WAYNE

LAVA GROUND ★★★

VP

Reggae newcomer blasts pornographers, KFC fans and other sinners

Rastafarian reggae crooner I Wayne debuts not with a bang but with a whimper. A beautiful whimper: He burns lyrical fire on the villains of Babylon—prostitutes, politicians, carnivores—using the frailest of tones, less like a fervent Jeremiah than a sweet, sniffling baby Jesus. The result is striking: a set of dulcet hymns about the world's ills. Whether singing a story about a prostitute whose "flesh start to rotten" ("Can't Satisfy Her") or weaving abstract poetry about the end of days ("Lava Ground"), I Wayne delivers tuneful choruses over spare, one-drop beats. He'd do well to vary his vocal style—that endearing whine can turn tedious—but I Wayne's music proves the proverb that you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "Lava Ground," "Rastafari Liveth," "More Life"

LIGHTNING BOLT

HYPERMAGIC MOUNTAIN

★★★★★

LOAD

Masked Providence duo love rainbows, obliterate heavy metal

The heaviest band in the world forswear guitars, refuse to play onstage (they sneak their massive bass stack and stripped-down drum set into the audience) and named

their last album, without irony, *Wonderful Rainbow*. Their resounding, weirdly charismatic fourth disc will dent skulls, but it's not dark. Bassist Brian Gibson sprays ultra-low mega-riffs like tar from a firehose while simultaneously shredding highs into kaleidoscopic melodies. Drummer Brian Chippendale smotheres the kit with an idiosyncratically rhythmic downpour, while ranting and sing-songing ecstatically into a dinky, distorted telephone mic. And there are gossamer details: the lovely blurs of reverb in the epic "Dead Cowboy," the humming lift-off build of "Magic Mountain" and the dolphin-like sounds in noise pastoral "Infinity Farm." The world's heaviest band turn out to have metal's lightest touch too.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Captain Caveman," "Infinity Farm," "Dead Cowboy"

LIVING THINGS

AHEAD OF THE LIONS ★★★★★

JIVE

Three St. Louis sibs get their Michael Moore on while shouting sexily about U.S. foreign policy

Lillian Berlin snarls angrily about the war in Iraq and just about everything in America, but it's plain to see that he gets laid more than Michael Moore. Berlin—who growls as if he's crouched on a rotating waterbed, beckoning a fellow anarchist—and his two brothers, Eve and Bosh, have taken the finely honed aggression of gleefully warring siblings and channeled it into barreling, inspired punk. There are echoes of the crusty U.K. punk offshoot Oi! (the slinky-then-scabrous "God Made Hate"), new wave (sax-accented "Monsters of Man"), garage and grunge. And beneath their steel-wool guitar tone, the songs swing like a slammed →

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YOUTH & YOUNG
MANHOOD (RCA)**

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Metric: "Ha ha! You said 'Pu-Pu.'"



door: Grimy riot anthem "Bom Bom Bom" is half squat, half disco.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Bom Bom Bom," "Monsters of Man," "I Owe"

DAMIAN "JR. GONG" MARLEY

WELCOME TO JAMROCK

★★★★

GHETTO YOUTHS/UNIVERSAL

Stunningly diverse reggae from one of music's most famous surnames

It ain't easy being a Marley. Nostalgia-heads hope you'll sound like Him

(Bob Marley) and sing solely about subjects like H.I.M. (Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie). Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley does neither—and therein lies his genius. The youngest Marley, 27, was bred on his father's legacy, yes, but also on Shabba and Super Cat, who redefined reggae for a post-Bob generation. His third album is thus a hauntingly beautiful merger of styles and eras. Over drum-heavy rhythms and timeless samples—including two from dad—Marley chats fast and furiously about ghetto life, sweetly serenades his girl and joins Nas on the "Road to Zion."

"Khaki Suit," featuring Eek-a-Mouse and Bounty Killer, offers the best of both worlds: reggae's past, gloriously recycled for the dance halls of the present.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "Welcome to Jamrock," "Khaki Suit," "There for You"

METRIC

LIVE IT OUT ★★★

LAST GANG

Itinerant Canadians want to convert America to the Metric system

The question posed by Metric's 2003 debut, *Old World Underground, Where Are You Now?*, has been answered. That album was largely about the lackluster music scene in the band's adopted home of L.A.; this follow-up, meanwhile, was mostly written in their native Toronto, where Metric's pals Broken Social Scene and Stars have been galvanizing a casually vibrant linked underground. Inspired by this, *Live It Out* is a spirited, gutsy evolution from the formalist new wave of Metric's first album—on opener "Empty," a sugar-sweet Cardigans-esque intro explodes into a distorted squall of attack-mode guitars and unhinged drumming, while "Poster of a Girl," with Emily Haines

singing breathily in French like a Gallic Karen O, suggests a sinister Paris nightclub circa 1982. By turns ethereal and violent, this is a deceptively pretty album with a dark heart.

APRIL LONG

DOWNLOAD: "Too Little Too Late," "Empty"

NADA SURF

THE WEIGHT IS A GIFT ★★★

BARSUK

Alt-rock one-hit wonders enter their Pottery Barn phase gracefully

Nada Surf's fluke 1996 hit "Popular" kissed high school goodbye with a raised middle finger, and the Brooklyn alt-poppers' 2003 comeback album *Let Go* was the sound of waking up with a college degree and no direction in life. On their fourth record, Nada Surf settle comfortably into adulthood. Singer-guitarist Matthew Caws's pep-talk platitudes ("To find someone you love/You gotta be someone you love") read as if they've been ripped from a guidance counselor's handbook, but when cushioned by glossy guitar jangle and cooing backing vocals they sound less mushy, even a bit mature. The band still let loose on occasion, though ("Oh, fuck it! I'm going to have a party!" Caws declares on the peppy "Blanket Year"), allowing themselves one last fling before the baby's born and the mortgage payments are due.

AMY PHILLIPS

DOWNLOAD: "Your Legs Grow" "Blanket Year"

O.A.R.

STORIES OF A STRANGER

★★

LAVA/ATLANTIC

D.C./Maryland fivesome are the Bonnaroo act with the sax player

You can't exactly accuse the group formally known as ... Of a Revolution of having sold out; they've never had the outsider's edge required before sellouts can cross over. But after achieving grassroots success, O.A.R. play it extra safe on their seventh album and major-label debut. Front-dude Marc Roberge sings exclusively in the key of abject sincerity, flitting

"THE MOST SEXUALLY EXTREME MAINSTREAM ROCK MOVIE EVER!"

— Clark Collis, Blender Magazine



9 songs

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Damian Marley:
"Have a seat,
Mr. Bond ..."

from suicidal depression ("I Heard the World") to honey-bunny love ("Wonderful Day"). The ballads are from Nowheresville, and "Program Director" blows smoke up radio's bum for airplay, albeit with some of the finest pop-reggae since UB40. Indeed, when the band finally get around to blowing, as on the horny-soldier lament "52-50," you understand how they became jam-band heroes; they're like the Dave Matthews Band without Dave Matthews.

RICHARD GEHR

DOWNLOAD: "52-50"

THE OCCASION

CANNERY HOURS ★★★

SAY HEY

Second album from a New York quintet has an entrancing, low-key drugginess. Recommended for Danny Boyle's next film

The Occasion's province is in-between emotions, and states of consciousness knocked slightly askew. "So Far" conjures an ecstasy of listlessness, while "Register My Complaints" and "Back in Town" are daydreamy with a tinge of unease. The textured and treated instrumentation courts confusion—it's hard to tell Jordi Wheeler's arcs of heavily sustained guitar from Brent Cordero's crinkly-toned electric piano, and Sara Shaw's tape-loops (like the eerie tremor that kick-starts "So Far") add to the gentle disorientation. The result is a subtle soft-psychedelic sound, somewhere between Air and Eels, that's attractive if detached. The oblique-verging on-opaque lyrics frustrate emotional involvement, and the fey vocals can sometimes get too-too exquisite. But submit to the sweet sedation and you'll find yourself transported into a strange daze.

SIMON REYNOLDS

DOWNLOAD: "So Far," "Back in Town," "Register My Complaints"



Backstreet Boys
try one last image
makeover.

THE PUSSYCAT DOLLS

PCD ★★

A&M

Six-piece set of Sunset Strip-pers put the "sex" back in sextet

Most rookie bands hone their craft playing half-empty clubs. The Pussycat Dolls did it playing half-naked ones. A revolving neo-burlesque troupe of aspiring singers, dancers

and starlets (think Menudo, only with hot ladies), the Dolls have been shaking their assets on L.A.'s Sunset Strip for a decade, often with Hollywood notables like Paris Hilton donning fishnets to shake alongside them. Now transformed into a pseudo-R&B group, they hook up with such hip-hop heavyweights as Timbaland, Busta Rhymes and Rich Harrison. First single "Don't Cha" is superb, a sly bump-and-grind full of

sexy taunts and funky horns. But their listless covers of new wave and disco hits sound more like the after-dinner show on a Carnival cruise. Word to the wise: Wait for the DVD.

JOSH EELLS

DOWNLOAD: "Don't Cha"

REV. RUN

DISTORTION ★★★

RSMG

A true hip-hop rarity: a 1980s pioneer with something left to say

Twenty-two years after Run-D.M.C. debuted with "It's Like That," it takes more than loud drums and louder boasts to raise hell. Thankfully, Run understands this. Following his group's awkward '90s albums and the October 2002 murder of Jam Master Jay, the ordained reverend's solo debut is a surprisingly gripping, no-frills appendix to the glory days. "It's your mama's favorite rapper!" he shouts over producer Whiteboy's chunky, throwback-flavored "I Used to Think I Was Run," while the conga-driven, Blondie-riffing "Take a Tour" reminisces about the golden era of flattops and fades. Despite the occasional misstep (the corny, Skynyrd-sampling Jay tribute "Home Sweet Home"), it's a welcome album to →

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ON TOUR THIS FALL



Carlos Santana attempts to write duet with chain-link fence.



FENCED IN

Third time's no charm for guitar whiz's all-star formula

SANTANA

ALL THAT I AM ★★

ARISTA

THERE'S NEVER BEEN an album like Santana's *Supernatural*. From Frank Sinatra to B.B. King, plenty of duet records match legends with peers or younger disciples. (Those records usually involve Bono.) But before Santana's 1999 blockbuster, no one had used a legend's admirers to do new material and not just record a tribute but also move a career forward.

Then again, it's hard to think of anyone as suited to such a plan as Carlos Santana. Lead singers have rotated through his namesake band for decades, yet he's remained the focal point; his rock-jazz-Latin sound is easily adaptable for different guests; and his astonishing, piercing guitar tone is recognizable in one note. So everything was in place for the flawless execution of *Supernatural* to take Santana from '60s holdout without a record contract to sweeping the 2000 Grammys and selling 12.5 million copies in the U.S.

The follow-up, 2003's *Shaman*, didn't live up to its predecessor, but did feature the irresistible single "The Game of Love," with Michelle Branch's winsome vocals and some blazing, African-flavored instrumentals.

Unfortunately, the inevitable third swing is an example of going to the well too often. The album starts promisingly enough, with two songs by the unadulterated Santana touring band. But the novelty of the all-star show has worn off, especially as the caliber of the all-stars has declined dramatically, from Dave Matthews, Eric Clapton and Lauryn Hill on *Supernatural* to Sean Paul, annoying Black Eyed Pea will.i.am and Bo Bice—Bo Bice!—this time. On tracks like the gloppy "Just Feel Better," with Steven Tyler of Aerosmith, you can feel the different parts being stitched together in the studio. Mostly it's the collaborations with other instrumentalists—Texan group Los Lonely Boys and a surprisingly restrained trio with slide guitarist Robert Randolph and Metallica's Kirk Hammett—that feel organic and alive. Carlos Santana's playing is undiminished, but it's time for him to focus on his band instead of his brand, and stick with a nice, no-name singer. As long as it's not will.i.am.

ALAN LIGHT

DOWNLOAD: "Twisted," "El Fuego"

CARLOS SANTANA'S CURRENT LISTENING

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POSSIBILITIES VECTOR/HANCOCK

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BLOOD & FIRE

anyone who wishes the past 15 years never happened to Run-D.M.C.'s legacy.

HUA HSU

DOWNLOAD: "I Used to Think I Was Run," "Mind on the Road"

SILVER JEWS

TANGLEWOOD NUMBERS

★★★

DRAG CITY

Indie-rock bard flips sentimental clichés inside-out on fifth album

Nashville poet David Berman has been leading the Silver Jews for well over a decade now, but he still sings as if he's way more familiar with chapbooks than microphones. His favorite trick as a lyricist is to isolate some cliché from the ambling country rock that inspires his own performances, and graft on alarmingly un-song-like language: "I always loved you to the max," or "I've been livin' in a K-hole ever since you went away." The first and less snarky half of *Tanglewood Numbers*, though, is some of the liveliest music Berman has recorded, thanks to loose, cheerful backup from indie-rock all-stars (including three-fifths of Pavement), particularly singer Cassie Marrett, who tempers and sweetens Berman's off-key drawl.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "Punks in the Beerlight," "Sometimes a Pony Gets Depressed"

STORY OF THE YEAR

IN THE WAKE OF DETERMINATION ★★

MAVERICK

Dreamy emo boys finally grow second testicles

Steeped in tales of love-so-deep-it-hurts, *Story of the Year*'s 2003 hit debut *Page Avenue* was aimed squarely at the doe-eyed subset of the Warped Tour crowd. Drying their tears, the St. Louis quintet make a serious play for the dudes in the pit, even enlisting high-cred hardcore producer Steve Evetts (Hatebreed, Snapcase) to help them toughen up their sound. The gambit works: Guitarists Ryan Phillips and Phillip Sneed now dole out smackdown riffs and razor-wire solos with equal aplomb, and singer Dan Marsala delivers his us-vs.-them screeds like a man born chewing on nails. It's a convincing stance, so when Marsala vows to "carve our names into their bones" in the defiant first single "We Don't Care Anymore," we're actually a wee bit scared.

TOM BEAUJOUR

DOWNLOAD: "Jarhead," "Sue Your Friends, Pay Your Enemy"

T.A.T.U.

DANGEROUS AND MOVING ★★

INTERSCOPE

Fake teenage lesbians grow up, refuse to kiss for the camera, make record with Sting. Why, dammit, why?

On their sensational 2002 debut, these faux-lesbian Lolitas sang about the maelstrom of adolescence as if they were fleeing a nuclear attack. It was the rare kind of teen pop that recognized the extremes of teen mood swings, the end-of-the-world drama of hormonal confusion. That these barely legal nymphets dressed in school uniforms and indulged in public face-sucking served to expand their demographic well beyond a teenage one. But

excepting the single "All About Us," which almost recaptures the panicked thrill of their barnstorming hit "All the Things She Said," this subdued follow-

up mostly plays it safe, with the help of some suspiciously fageyish guests (Sting on bass, a Richard Carpenter string arrangement). It's a career move that should seal their reputation as the middle-aged man's favorite pseudo-Sappho pop duo.

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD: "All About Us," "Dangerous and Moving"

OTIS TAYLOR

BELOW THE FOLD ★★

TELARC

History lessons and shopping advice from a 57-year-old Colorado bluesman who knows about pricey neckwear

If you think the blues has become a musty museum piece best left to PBS documentaries and B.B. King's diabetes commercials—well, sadly, you're mostly right. So give thanks for Otis Taylor, a Denver-based shaman doing his damndest to keep the genre alive and kicking. On his seventh album, Taylor's sound stays rooted in mesmerizing drones, spiked with such unlikely touches as cello and banjo. His spare lyrics range from history lessons (songs based on a miner's strike and the plight of black soldiers in World War II) to the deeply personal (surely the first blues lyric to start "I went to Hermès/And I bought her a scarf"). His voice is so intimate, meanwhile, that it feels as if he's letting you in on high-stakes secrets. Taylor proves there's still such a thing as true blues power.

ALAN LIGHT

DOWNLOAD: "Didn't Know Much About Education," "Hookers in the Street," "Feel Like Lightning"



A crotchety Neil Young demands you get off his lawn.

TENEMENT HALLS

KNITTING NEEDLES & BICYCLE BELLS ★★

MERGE

Former Rock*A*Teen debuts seductive songs inspired by manic-depression

Chris Lopez—the singer-songwriter behind both the '90s Atlanta garage band the Rock*A*Teens and this seemingly modest new project—channels characters from the bottom of the bottle, where the world is blurry with bouts of giddiness and depression. But this isn't some exhausting bender: His wry lyrics and melodic flights lend the disc unexpectedly sharp, stirring edges. Smeared with reverberation, the gloomy yet lovely proposal "Marry Me" is at once deeply romantic and distressingly resigned. In "Silver From the Silt," a pleasantly slack stew of acoustic guitar and organ, Lopez urges nostalgics to "just quit" in an oddly uplifting, quavering lilt. The disheveled singalong "Promise a Place" even quotes the gospel warhorse "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." Lopez gets away with it all because there's a lasting ache to his melodrama.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Silver From the Silt," "Starless Night"

THREE 6 MAFIA

MOST KNOWN UNKNOWN ★★

COLUMBIA/SONY URBAN

Overly prolific Tennessee collective declare a love for "Body Parts"

Three 6 Mafia have been called the "Wu-Tang Clan of the South"—which, minus the kung fu, distinct personalities and old dirty bastards is almost accurate. Like the Clan, the Mafia spent a decade building a hermetically sealed universe where they supply their own beats (thanks to members Juicy J and DJ Paul), protégés (Gangsta Boo, Lil' Whyte), trademark sound (throbbing menace), cocktail ("sizzurp") and awesomely named side projects (Tear da Club Up Thugs). Their fourth major album reaches out with a boatload of guests (six on "Body Parts 3" alone) but offers little variety: 70 minutes of politically incorrect anger ("I'll cut your head off



t.A.T.u. love stripping. Cars, that is!

like al Qaeda"). Only the luscious single "Stay Fly" (featuring Tennessee titans Young Buck and 8Ball & MJG), with its hypnotic '70s soul loop, rises above the fray. A flashy guest list is nice, but next time, hire a doorman.

ANDY GREENWALD

DOWNLOAD: "Stay Fly"

TOM VEK

WE HAVE SOUND ★★

STAR TIME INTERNATIONAL

One-man band combines geek chic and menacing basslines

Even though he never left his bedroom, Tom Vek—a 23-year-old London multi-instrumentalist who recorded this debut at home—makes music for the dance floor. The brilliant first four tracks exude a rakish disco-rock aura. They also betray

Vek's gently oddball inwardness, from a dream he relates at length ("A Little Word in Your Ear") to the glitchy electronic flourishes he plants in otherwise razor-hooked, neat-as-a-pin songs. It's what sets him apart from the many other acts manifestly following Franz Ferdinand. The speedy new wave and bittersweet falsetto of "I Ain't Saying My Good-byes" handily counter "all these young men obsessed with death," and "C-C (You Set the Fire in Me)," propelled by a power-walking bassline and garage-style organ stabs, tingles like the consummation of a crush. Finally: bedroom music from a guy who seems to know his way around the bedroom.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "C-C (You Set the Fire in Me)," "If You Want"

BLENDER APPROVED

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FRANZ FERDINAND

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EPIC

More romping disco-punk about drugs, parties and pretend homoeroticism.



THE ROLLING STONES

A BIGGER BANG

VIRGIN

Ensure? Viagra? Mick, Keef & co. hike up their leather pants and unleash their rockiest album in ages.



THE MAGIC NUMBERS

THE MAGIC NUMBERS

CAPITOL

An infectiously sunny debut from coed London hippies who look like hillbillies, harmonize like angels.



KANYE WEST

LATE REGISTRATION

ROC-A-FELLA

The first album from hip-hop's Bush-knocking genius was a masterpiece. This one may be better.



THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS

TWIN CINEMA

MATADOR

Canada's reigning maestros of power-pop get reflective on album three. It's beautiful, eh?



GRETCHEN WILSON

ALL JACKED UP

EPIC

A Bud-guzzling, flag-waving, Paris Hilton-bashing second set from Nashville's redneck queen.

NEIL YOUNG

PRAIRIE WIND ★★

REPRISE

In hard times, rock's greatest explorer considers the passing of time and friends



Between a brain aneurysm and the death of his father, it's been a rough year for Neil Young. As if stretching back for comfort, *Prairie Wind* marks a return to the loping country-rock Young first staked out on his 1972 breakthrough *Harvest* and revisited later on *Comes a Time* and *Harvest Moon*. As usual, though, the songs are weirder and darker than their gentle melodies indicate. Young digs deep into the themes of aging and mortality that have always been at the heart of his work ("Heart of Gold," his only No. 1 single, built to the refrain "And I'm getting old"—and that was when he was 26). The sound is warm and welcoming, trancelike when it's most despondent, and the lyrics as spare and direct as journal entries, even when he pulls odd stunts like quoting Chris Rock in a ramble that also mentions Willie Nelson and 9/11. "If you follow every dream, you might get lost," he muses, quietly but not softly, and it's both a warning and a promise.

ALAN LIGHT

DOWNLOAD: "Prairie Wind," "This Old Guitar," "He Was the King"

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READ OUR LIPS: POP'S CUTEST LITTLE SISTER IS BACK, AND BALLADEERING PUNKS DON'T STAND A CHANCE!



"DON'T PUT WOOL IN THE DRYER, FOLKS."

1

ASHLEE SIMPSON

"BOYFRIEND"

I AM ME

Jettisoning pop-punk for this postpunk jam about cheating hearts, Jessica's little sis is back—a bit older, a bit hipper, a lot blonder. Cheekily acknowledging last year's Ashlee-gate lip-synch debacle, she hosted the premiere of *SNL* earlier this month. Before the month is through, you can catch her playing club dates in Boston, Chicago and Atlanta.

HOW WE DID IT

The Most Popular Songs chart is based on radio and video airplay and album sales. Provided by HITSDailyDouble.com: "Proof that any idiot in the music business can have a Web site."



POSITION	TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM/LABEL
1	"BOYFRIEND"	ASHLEE SIMPSON	I AM ME Geffen
2	"WAKE ME UP WHEN SEPTEMBER ENDS"	GREEN DAY	AMERICAN IDIOT Reprise
3	"SHAKE IT OFF"	MARIAH CAREY	THE EMANCIPATION OF MIMI ISLAND
4	"BECAUSE OF YOU"	KELLY CLARKSON	BREAKAWAY RCA
5	"PHOTOGRAPH"	NICKELBACK	ALL THE RIGHT REASONS Roadrunner
6	"FEEL GOOD INC."	GORILLAZ	DEMON DAYS Virgin
7	"GOLD DIGGER"	KANYE WEST	LATE REGISTRATION Roc-A-Fella
8	"GOOD IS GOOD"	SHERYL CROW	WILDFLOWER A&M/Interscope
9	"UNBREAKABLE"	ALICIA KEYS	UNPLUGGED J Records
10	"FIX YOU"	COLDPLAY	X&Y Capitol
11	"LIKE YOU"	BOW WOW	WANTED Columbia/Sony Urban
12	"DO YOU WANT TO"	FRANZ FERDINAND	YOU COULD HAVE IT SO MUCH BETTER Domino/Epic
13	"SITTIN' SIDEWAYZ"	PAUL WALL	THE PEOPLE'S CHAMP Swishahouse/Asylum/Atlantic
14	"SUGAR, WE'RE GOING DOWN"	FALL OUT BOY	FROM UNDER THE CORK Tree Island
15	"I DON'T CARE"	RICKY MARTIN	LIFE Columbia
16	"MY HUMPS"	BLACK EYED PEAS	MONKEY BUSINESS A&M/Interscope
17	"OUTTA CONTROL"	50 CENT	THE MASSACRE G-Unit/Interscope
18	"WELCOME HOME"	COHEED AND CAMBRIA	GOOD APOLLO, I'M BURNING... Columbia
19	"DOA"	FOO FIGHTERS	IN YOUR HONOR RCA
20	"O' SAILOR"	FIONA APPLE	EXTRAORDINARY MACHINE Epic
21	"PRECIOUS"	DEPECHE MODE	PLAYING THE ANGEL Reprise
22	"DON'T CHA"	PUSSYCAT DOLLS	PCD A&M/Interscope
23	"RIGHT HERE"	STAINED	CHAPTER V Atlantic
24	"PLAY"	DAVID BANNER	CERTIFIED SRC/Universal
25	"HELENA"	MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE	THREE CHEERS FOR SWEET REVENGE Reprise
26	"WE BE BURNIN'"	SEAN PAUL	THE TRINITY VPJ/Atlantic
27	"YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL"	JAMES BLUNT	BACK TO BEDLAM Atlantic
28	"YOU'LL THINK OF ME"	KEITH URBAN	GOLDEN ROAD Capitol Nashville
29	"LOSE CONTROL"	MISSY ELLIOTT	THE COOKBOOK Violator/Goldmind/Atlantic
30	"UNCONDITIONAL"	THE BRAVERY	THE BRAVERY Island/IDJ
31	"BEVERLY HILLS"	WEEZER	MAKE BELIEVE Geffen
32	"MORE THAN WORDS"	FRANKIE J.	THE ONE Columbia
33	"ONLY"	NINE INCH NAILS	WITH TEETH Interscope
34	"WE BELONG TOGETHER"	MARIAH CAREY	THE EMANCIPATION OF MIMI ISLAND
35	"SOUL SURVIVOR"	YOUNG JEEZY	LET'S GET IT: THUG MOTIVATION 101 Def Jam South/IDJ
36	"ALL THESE THINGS THAT I'VE DONE"	THE KILLERS	HOT FUSS Island
37	"MIND ON THE ROAD"	REV RUN	DISTORTION RSMG
38	"OHIO IS FOR LOVERS"	HAWTHORNE HEIGHTS	THE SILENCE IN BLACK AND WHITE Victory
39	"SHE SAYS"	HOWIE DAY	STOP ALL THE WORLD NOW Daze/Epic
40	"HOLIDAY"	GREEN DAY	AMERICAN IDIOT Reprise



RICKY MARTIN

"I DON'T CARE"

LIFE

For his first album in five years, R-Mart leads off with a booming hip-hop-styled track about coming home earlier than expected and finding your girlfriend brazenly humping some other dude in the bathroom—and forgiving her anyway. This month Martin can be found rocking the morning and midday crowds, hanging out with Regis and Oprah.



FIONA APPLE

"O' SAILOR"

EXTRAORDINARY MACHINE

In the six years since she last put out a record, this piano-playing chanteuse has been unseated as the most famous Apple in rock & roll by an 18-month-old baby. (Real cool, Chris Martin.) But now she's finally back to reclaim the No. 1 spot with her long-delayed, much-anticipated third album, featuring this ode to a seaman who did her wrong.

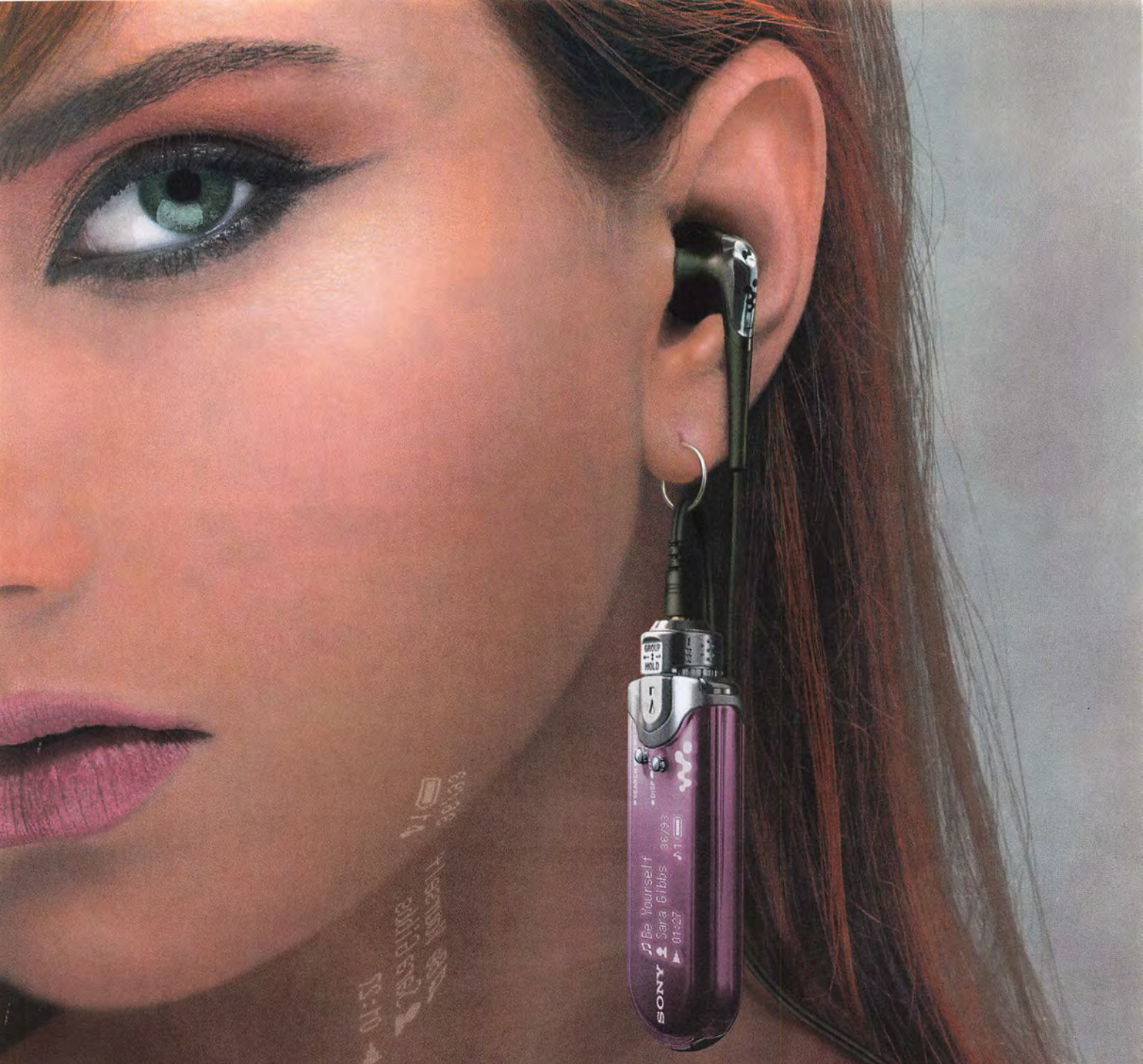
27

JAMES BLUNT

"YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL"

BACK TO BEDLAM

James Blunt is a former English army captain who's been shot at in Kosovo and guarded the Queen Mother's tomb. So gangsta! His debut album—starring this bittersweet ballad about a run-in on the subway—knocked Coldplay off the top of the U.K. charts. Catch him on the West Coast, opening for Jason Mraz through the end of the month.



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ELTON JOHN

CAPTAIN FANTASTIC AND THE BROWN DIRT COWBOY ★★

ISLAND/UMC

The king of '70s pop gets self-serious. Bring back the duck suit!

At different times in his endless career, Elton John has questioned his own awesome pophead skill, and this slide into FM puffiness marks his first doubting moments. The title touts the nicknames he and his opaque lyricist Bernie Taupin assigned themselves for this 1975 suite about a songwriting team's travails. The tunes differ greatly from John's previous eight collections, models all of punchy rock-soul-funk charisma. The vivid arrangements and rhythms remain, but the music that emerges is diffused; a blues number such as "Tell Me When the Whistle Blows" makes interesting moves, yet the melody goes ambient. Even the collection's two hits, "Someone Saved My Life Tonight" and "Philadelphia Freedom," a 1975 single-only release tagged onto subsequent CD issues, seem merely stadium-sized. An accompanying disc documents the album played live at Wembley Stadium; the rawer presentation adds no punch.

JAMES HUNTER

DOWNLOAD: "Tell Me When the Whistle Blows," "Bitter Fingers"

KILLING JOKE

KILLING JOKE ★★

WHAT'S THIS FOR ...! ★★

EMI

Apocalyptic proto-goths whose song "Eighties" Nirvana pilfered on "Come As You Are"

When Killing Joke drummer Paul Ferguson compared his band to "the sound of the earth vomiting," he nailed the elemental power of their colossal, slab-like rhythms and Jaz Coleman's scalding vocal eruptions. From them sprang goth, industrial and much more besides: Metallica and Foo Fighters both covered songs from *Killing Joke*, the 1980 debut. These remastered discs sound even more like the end of days. The debut is the more accessible, thanks to the tungsten-hard grooves and catchy battle cries of "Change" and "Wardance," while *what's THIS for ...!* plunges further into dense, dark death-disco. After 1982's *Revelations* (also reissued, as is the live album *Ha!*), KJ went on enforced hiatus as bassist Youth experienced an acid-induced breakdown and Coleman high-tailed it to Iceland to await armageddon. They were just that kind of band.

DORIAN LYNKEY

DOWNLOAD: "Wardance," "Change," "The Wait," "Follow the Leaders"



Madonna slowly gets the hang of the Kabbalah bracelet.

NATALIE MERCHANT

RETROSPECTIVE 1990-2005 ★★

RHINO

Granola goddess makes jazzy folk-pop that's uplifting—when it's not sleep-inducing



An Upstate New York hippie chick with an inexplicably British-sounding voice, Natalie Merchant

bailed on 10,000 Maniacs—her misnamed band of gentle new wave folk-rockers—in the early '90s to make gentler music solo. Much of it has been bubble-bath folk-pop with lite-jazz frosting and inspirational lyrics that'd be utterly tedious if not for her singularly voluptuous phrasing. So it is that this single-disc survey (the Deluxe Version adds a negligible CD of rarities with cameos by Michael Stipe and Billy Bragg) is only 75% tedious. But on the newer tracks, Merchant morphs from New Age earth mother to ageless dust

bowler, singing spare, creaky songs that let her voice flutter like a worn bedsheet on a clothesline—less certain-sounding, and more convincing for it.

WILL HERMES

DOWNLOAD: "Sally Ann"

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS WAVE TO EACH OTHER ★★

H TO HE WHO AM THE ONLY ONE ★★

PAWN HEARTS ★★

CAROLINE

Cult band who trailblazed the darker side of '70s British prog-rock

Earlier this year, Van Der Graaf Generator re-formed and released their first album in decades. The timing was perfect: Groups like the Mars Volta have been rehabilitating and renovating progressive rock by giving it an aggressive, noisy edge. A mix of prog and punk was always Van Der Graaf's game, and these reissues

show why Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols admired VGGG frontman Peter Hammill's piercing vocals and macabre, imagistic lyrics. Now and then you'll even hear some uncanny advance glimpses of Rotten's snarl-sneer in Hammill's aristocratic and dramatic tones. The music has yet to shed the glad-rags of late-era psychedelia on 1970's *The Least We Can Do*, though later that year, on *H to He*, VGGG blossomed into a mighty monster with hard-riffing tunes like "Killer," powered by the rasping raunch of David Jackson's saxophones and the murky churn of Hugh Banton's keyboards. Released the next year, *Pawn Hearts* climaxes with the 10-part "A Plague of Lighthouse Keepers," which moves through trudging bombast, woodwind-laced ambience, *musique concrète* outbursts and more. Yes, it's portentous, and sure, it's pretentious. It's also visceral and surprisingly swinging, thanks to the lithe drumming of Guy Evans. These reissues are expanded with splendid bonus material like the absurdly named 15-minute "Squid 1/Squid 2/Octopus."

SIMON REYNOLDS

DOWNLOAD: "Killer," "The Emperor in His War Room," "A Plague of Lighthouse Keepers," "Squid 1/Squid 2/Octopus"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

JUST SAY SIRE: THE SIRE RECORDS STORY ★★

SIRE/RHINO RECORDS

Record mogul Seymour Stein had fabulous taste in new wave, Brit bands and a young singer named Madonna

In the us-vs.-them atmosphere of '80s collegiate rock, even the staunchest major-label-hater—Paul Westerberg of the Replacements, for example—had to admit that Sire was pretty cool. With a roster that included punk heroes (Ramones, Talking Heads), U.K. indie darlings (the Smiths, Everything but the Girl), European dance-floor wackos (Plastic Bertrand, Telex) and a world-dominating disco queen (Madonna), Sire set an industry record for turning left-of-center oddities into icons. That doesn't mean these 81 tracks from 81 artists belong in a box set together. The Undertones' three-chord stomper "Teenage Kicks" doesn't inform Erasure's bleeding-heart synth opus "Oh L'Amour"; Tommy Page's teen-schlocky "I'll Be Your Everything" and Uncle Tupelo's country-raggy "Give Back the Key to My Heart" share nothing but a logo. The liner notes fawn over label co-founder Seymour Stein. Oh, right, stroking the boss—there's a cause to bring disparate musicians together.

KAREN SCHOEMER

DOWNLOAD: Plastic Bertrand, "Ça Plane Pour Moi"; My Bloody Valentine, "Soon"

BLENDER APPROVED

THE BEST REISSUES FROM THE PAST MONTHS



JOHNNY CASH

THE LEGEND

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

The Man in Black is gone but not forgotten with this four-disc tribute that's as complex as he was.



NEW YORK DOLLS

TOO MUCH TOO SOON

HIP-O SELECT/MERCURY

Straight out of 1974, a brawling second album from NYC's trashiest gender-benders.

THE SCORE

★★★★★

A CLASSIC

★★★★

GREAT

★★★

GOOD

★★

MEDIOCRE

★

FOUL

RAY CHARLES

PURE GENIUS: THE COMPLETE ATLANTIC RECORDINGS (1952-1959)

★★★★★

RHINO

Deluxe, encyclopedic treatment of the Genius in his greatest glory days

This epic collection captures Ray Charles's journey from a young, smooth Charles Brown/Nat "King" Cole wannabe, through earth-shattering hits like "Hallelujah I Love Her So" and "What'd I Say," into a funky batch of jazz recordings, culminating in the cataclysmic "I Believe to My Soul." It's six CDs' worth of history plus a disc of rehearsals and outtakes and a killer DVD of a 1960 performance, all in a super-deluxe case that has "Grammy nomination" written all over it. For more casual fans, the 1991 *Birth of Soul* box distills the R&B material from these years down to three knockout discs, while the five CDs of 1997's *Genius & Soul* cover the full range of a 50-year career (for better and, only occasionally, for worse). But if you can drop the \$150 for this megabox, you'll witness the crystallization and then expansion of Charles's unprecedented synthesis of gospel, R&B, pop and jazz. And you'll see how he earned the nickname "the Genius."

ALAN LIGHT

DOWNLOAD: "Hard Times," "Rockhouse," "Come Rain or Come Shine"

DAVID ALLAN COE

PENITENTIARY BLUES

★★★★

HACKTONE/SHOUT! FACTORY

Wild songwriter could teach 50 Cent a few things about outlaw life

A raw, stubborn, stare-you-down kind of album, David Allan Coe's debut came in 1970, three years after he got out of jail. Coe was 30, still four years from writing Tanya Tucker's hit "Would You Lay With Me (In a Field of Stone)," seven from



Willie Nelson gives Hilary Duff a contact high.



Johnny Paycheck's "Take This Job and Shove It." Penitentiary systems were almost all he'd known since his teens, so he had stories to tell. He poured them into this confrontational blues record; the songs tell of coke madness, jail sadness and visions of girlfriends dressed in scarlet red. His voice mixes Merle Haggard's assured baritone with Screamin' Jay Hawkins's manic whooping. The backing is spare, and Coe's writing comes close in for details, like this in "Oh Warden": "Scrub floors in the daytime/Bust rocks by the moon/When I go to the mess hall/Gotta eat my meat wid' a spoon." Chilling.

BEN RATLIFF

DOWNLOAD: "Penitentiary Blues," "Funeral Parlor Blues," "Oh Warden"

DONOVAN

TRY FOR THE SUN

★★★★

EPIC/LEGACY

Dippy '60s hippie who once titled an album *Barabajagal*

The paradox of Donovan is that he is both real and fake, a coffeehouse purist spinning ancient rhymes as well as a pop star offering entry into a kandy-colored wonderland. His flower-tossing persona and fantasy-

folk compositions epitomized the epic playfulness of the 1960s—the silly streak that softened people up for psychedelia and Zen. Donovan's evolution from Woody Guthrie groupie to cosmic Wizard of Oz and back is intricately revealed on this rarities-flecked three-CD set. The early Dylan replicas are still weak, but once our gap-toothed guru hits his stride with "Sunshine Superman," he offers delicious (and well-played, by friends including Jeff Beck and most of Led Zeppelin) enlightenment. It may even make you try smoking banana peels.

ANN POWERS

DOWNLOAD: "Season of the Witch," "There Is a Mountain"

HILARY DUFF

MOST WANTED

★★★

HOLLYWOOD

New wave girl meets punk rock boys and still plays nice on hits set

Hilary Duff has not a single anxious bone in her body; that's both her appeal and her downfall. A fluorescent optimism saturates her music, from its big '80s beats to her pitch-controlled soprano squeak. This premature hits package features three new songs that Duff wrote with boyfriend Joel Madden and his brother Benji, of Good Charlotte; all of them serve Duff's goal of turning adolescent confusion into anthemic light. "Break My Heart," a would-be catharsis that proves Duff's total inability to express angst even when shouting about falling apart, typifies a sound that's fine as danceable abstraction but frighteningly empty in human terms. It's comforting to fans and their parents alike that, unlike the cynical Avril or the intense Pink, Hilary isn't a bad girl, even secretly. But if she wants to rock,

Duff's gotta find a little bad (or something) somewhere.

ANN POWERS

DOWNLOAD: "So Yesterday"

MELISSA ETHERIDGE

GREATEST HITS: THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

★★★★

ISLAND

A career-spanning set from David Crosby's babymama

There's plenty to admire about Melissa Etheridge. A breast-cancer survivor who brought lesbians into America's living room long before Marissa Cooper, her tortured confessional about flesh and souls were catnip to '90s rock fans who liked their women earnest and tough-seeming. But one decade and 12 platinum plaques later, these hits—minus the terrific "I'm the Only One," where her smoky howl and bluesy swagger are downright sexy—just seem overwrought. Then again, they're better than *Road's* four new songs, including the well-intentioned but cringingly sentimental "I Run for Life" and a cover of Janis Joplin's "Piece of My Heart," which Etheridge, bald from chemo, belted out far more heroically at this year's Grammy Awards.

JOSH EELLS

DOWNLOAD: "I'm the Only One"

THE HIGHWAYMEN

THE ROAD GOES ON FOREVER

★★★★★

CAPITOL NASHVILLE/EMI

Four grizzled country outlaws sing about death, hell and waitresses

In Nashville, greatness usually involves vocal clarity and instrumental elegance. This 1995 masterpiece by four ornery, late-middle-aged masters trashes all that. In contrast to their two previous Highwaymen summits, Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Kris Kristofferson and Willie Nelson make aging feel tenacious, flinty, alive. Superstar producer Don Was guided them, but the result sounds as if no less an anti-slick genius than Neil Young is at work here, coaxing Kevin Welch's shattering ballad "Everyone Gets Crazy" and literate rave-ups by the terrific Texan songwriter Stephen Bruton into high expressions of scruffiness. Cash is ultra-real, Jennings warty but unimprovable, Kristofferson far more than the actor he was in the '80s and Nelson skips pomposity. Includes six new cat-dragged-in demos. In this context, their unfinished states seem perfect.

JAMES HUNTER

DOWNLOAD: "I Do Believe," "Waiting for a Long Time," "True Love Travels on a Gravel Road"

ALL HAIL THE KINGS

THESE TWO GROUPS FORGED MODERN RAP—THEN BLEW IT UP

RUN-D.M.C.

RUN-D.M.C. ★★★★★

KING OF ROCK ★★★★★

RAISING HELL ★★★★★

TOUGHER THAN LEATHER ★★★★★

PROFILE/ARISTA/LEGACY

PUBLIC ENEMY

POWER TO THE PEOPLE AND THE BEATS:
PUBLIC ENEMY'S GREATEST HITS ★★★★★

DEF JAM/UME

ANYONE TRYING TO prove we're living through a period of Global Rap Stagnation need only cite the years 1984–1988. In that period, the growth of hip-hop followed Moore's Law, which states that the power of computer circuits doubles every 18 months. In '84: Run-D.M.C.'s spare, exuberant debut—shocking first proof that rap could sustain a full album. In '88: Public Enemy's *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, a furious, sampledelic jeremiad, widely considered hip-hop's apogee. This was like going from *The Iliad* to *Ulysses* in four years. And the last four? 2001: sex, beef, bling by Jay-Z. 2005: sex, beef, bling by 50 Cent. Conclusion: I ♥ the '80s.

To young readers who think Flavor Flav is just a reality-TV weirdo, though, this music might not even be recognizable as hip-hop. Where's the lush swirl, the chopped-up R&B, the triple-feel skitter? By today's standards, Run-D.M.C.'s debut sounds like a drum-machine demo with two janitors on the mic. (Who now would rap cute like "We don't do crimes/We bake a little cake with Duncan Hines"?). And Public Enemy sound like a crew of grinding, sputtering outsider artists—amped-up cranks shouting about politics, the media and EMS response times. While wearing big clocks.

But with its strict turntables-and-beatbox-only aesthetic, the New York duo Run-D.M.C. proved, as Chuck D rapped on "Bring the Noise," that a DJ could be a band—and that rappers could be on MTV, rule the pop charts and win Grammys, back when nearly the only blacks on MTV were



Prince and Michael Jackson. It's this kind of gigantic profile, almost as if they were Civil Rights pioneers, that helps modern ears glide over the Night Ranger guitar harmonies on "Rock Box" or rhymes like "The beat is big, it's kind of large/And when we're on the mic, we're in charge." (Oy.) Modern rhymeologists quail in the face of a Hip-Hop Monument like *Run-D.M.C.*, which can even get away with an extra track of Def Jam billionaire Russell Simmons and producer Larry Smith bullshitting unintelligibly about the Old School over 808 beats. This is, after all, the Declaration of Independence; it belongs in the Smithsonian.

The sophomore *King of Rock* (whose new footnotes include "Slow and Low," later given to the Beastie Boys) stands just as tall, due to the MCs' attitude and the bumrushing cheek of the title concept, that Run-D.M.C. were not only rockers but rock's new rulers. Still, no such slack need be cut for album three, when Run-D.M.C. achieved the state of divine aggro satori in 1986 with *Raising Hell*, still one of the most listenable rap albums: "Peter Piper," "It's Tricky," "My Adidas," "Walk This Way" (whose demo shows Joe Perry and Steve Tyler of Aerosmith working their way into the new groove)—all stomp forth on that early Def Jam trademark of metal power chords and raw-throated MCs, the sound of giants walking the earth, even if they slowed down two years later on *Tougher Than Leather*. That album's liner notes, by Chuck D, pose the question, How do you top a *Raising Hell*? "You don't. Instead, you go another direction."

Which is what Public Enemy did that same year. Founded in Long Island by art-student-turned-Afro-Chomsky Chuck D, gonzo radio DJ Flavor Flav and mixmaster Hank Shocklee, the group put out one album of straight boulevard shakers like "You're Gonna Get Yours" (one of the great car songs) before exploding—musically and culturally—with *Nation of Millions* in 1988. This was a rallying cry to a dormant demographic that actually listened—due partially to the power of Chuck D's baritone declamations, partially to the Shocklee-led Bomb Squad production, with its sampler mosaic of James Brown beats, Malcolm X sound bites, grinding metal and actual explosions. Suddenly, the entire American catalogue of soul, funk and R&B had been converted into potential ballistics, and the hip-hop generation was, for a brief moment, a strong, unified force.

How could it last? It couldn't. And this best-of charts the ebb of PE's influence after it peaked with "Fight the Power" (from *Fear of a Black Planet*), as most of the hip-hop generation bailed on the fight and opted instead for the cushier comforts of blunts and Escalades. PE were singularly engaged with issues of their moment, and as headline references like Tawana Brawley and Howard Beach fade like newsprint, their music inevitably suffers. Chuck D's oft-repeated quote that rap was "the black CNN" was never truer than with Public Enemy, but who other than historians wants to look at CNN crawls from 20 years ago?

Flavor Flav may have gone on to canoodle white devil Brigitte Nielsen, but PE stuck to its guns even after ceding the world stage to fake gangstas "suckin' up to the devil, steppin' down a level" (as Chuck raps on "Give It Up"). Like Run-D.M.C., they weren't bad meaning bad, but bad meaning good.

CHRIS NORRIS

DOWNLOAD Run-D.M.C.: "Sucker M.C.'s (Krush-Groove 1)," "It's Tricky," "Peter Piper," "Walk This Way"; Public Enemy: "Bring the Noise," "You're Gonna Get Yours," "Prophets of Rage"

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Smelling further corporate sponsorship, Jagger does his impression of the Cingular logo.



WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

GREEDY? WASHED-UP? LAUGHABLE OLD-TIMERS? SAY HELLO TO THE GREATEST ROCK SHOW OF THE YEAR

THE ROLLING STONES

RENTSCHLER FIELD
EAST HARTFORD,
CONNECTICUT

AUGUST 26, 2005 ★★★★★

NICK STABILE IS a salesman in his 50s who couldn't get what he wanted, a Mike's Hard Lemonade, but got what he needed, a Smirnoff Ice. An Eagles fanatic who'd passed on their \$200 tickets in 2004, he gladly coughed up \$101 apiece for two seats at the rear of East Hartford's 33,000-capacity Rentschler Field. He went most of all because he never had. "How can you be a rock fan and never see the Rolling Stones? You're not gonna see the Beatles."

Stabile is lucky he waited—this tour burns. At 46, Mick Jagger was battling a midlife

crisis. At 62, he's defying death. In 1995, the deft live *Stripped* CD polished the Stones' groove. In 2005, without repeating one title from *Stripped*, the *Bigger Bang* tour wallops their beat. Its signature move caps the encore, when Jagger climaxes a two-hour performance by running nonstop for 65 yards across a silver-and-black set that suggests a home audio console doubling as a suburban office building. Hey, they're the world's greatest rock & roll band again.

The deepest songbook this side of Bob Dylan's is where it starts, and it's growing—1997's "Out of Control" is now a staple, muted trumpet shading spectral

guitar, and "Oh No, Not You Again" and "Rough Justice" from their new *A Bigger Bang* album stand proud alongside "Satisfaction" and "Tumbling Dice." But band means *band*, and as Charlie Watts defied death the modern way, with oncology, Jagger and Keith Richards went back to reveling in their togetherness. Hence their revitalized songwriting—and the rocking energy of the tour.

Chestnuts were dusted off—"Beast of Burden"'s sweet new guitar part welcome, "All Down the Line"'s horn blasts in place, "Ruby Tuesday"'s flute unmissed. But from "Start Me Up" to "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "Brown Sugar," warhorses ridden like

Arabian steeds carried the night, typified by the wild intensity of Richards crouching behind keyboardist Chuck Leavell to wail on "Satisfaction"—played, like "Miss You" and "Honky Tonk Women," from a movable mini-stage that brought the band halfway into a throng that otherwise got close only via exceptional amplification and video direction. (Audacious touch: black-and-white Stones looking cuddly in 1974 as the craggy monsters onstage ripped through 1980's "She's So Cold.") Jagger's voice never faltered; Richards should—yeah sure—give up cigarettes before he's singing through a tube.

As the Stones have always told us, pleasure is of the moment, signifying nothing beyond itself. They get miffed when reporters ask whether they're in it for art or money, because they don't recognize the distinction. And after all, this tour is expected to gross a mere \$200 million, \$100 million less than last time. Hartford tickets ranged from \$62 to \$162, with a \$402 VIP section up front. The sponsor





Keith slips a disc—again.

was Ameriquest, a mortgage company that recently set aside \$325 million to settle lawsuits in 30 states—and also reserved 36 prime seats at the Boston show for a Schwarzenegger fundraiser. Few in a middle-aged audience where most under-25s came with their parents seemed likely mortgage customers. Maybe Ameriquest figured there'd be judges in the crowd.

Though they didn't do "Gimme Shelter," much less the Bush-bashing new "Sweet Neo Con," Jagger did endeavor, through many deep-skanking "Yo yo yo"s, to incite serious sing-along action on the "Stand up for your rights" chorus of the Wailers' "Get Up, Stand Up." The response was polite but baffled: what rights? On the other hand, "Sympathy for the Devil," a silly song in its reflexively transgressive heyday, gained weight with the resurgent forces of fundamentalist righteousness threatening to expunge all such loose talk from culture worldwide. The Stones may be greedheads, but they're our greedheads.

Encore complete, all 13 in the troupe—horns, backup singers, slidemaster Ron Wood, better-than-Bill bassist Darryl Jones—gathered to wave goodbye, with Watts, appropriately, dead center. Would there be a second encore—"The Last Time," perhaps? No way. With this much energy on the table, it definitely wasn't the last time. **ROBERT CHRISTGAU**



Clarkson stars in *From Justin to Kelly 2: The Search for Justin*.

IDOL WORSHIP

SHE'S GOT A GREAT VOICE AND ONE OF THE YEAR'S BEST HITS—BUT WE'RE STILL WONDERING, WHO IS KELLY CLARKSON?

KELLY CLARKSON

COLORADO CONVENTION CENTER
DENVER, COLORADO
AUGUST 30, 2005 ★★

THE COLORADO CONVENTION Center's sound-system AC/DC already has 'em shaking in the aisles when Kelly Clarkson hauls her American thighs onstage and 5,000 blond girls go berserk (alongside assorted minders and a few teenage boys perhaps still working certain things out), a roiling inland sea of merch jerseys, some homemade, one 11-year-old having Sharpie'd "Miss Independent" onto a plain white T-shirt. They offer the unironic love made only in the heartland to their big-voiced star, the 23-year-old ex-waitress from Texas who only 48 hours before was triumphantly closing the Video Music Awards barefoot, and who now confronts this adoring crowd that is madly, hormonally, ready to ... what?

That's the thing. For all Clarkson's appeal, her smash debut and triple-platinum 2004 followup *Breakaway*, no one's

exactly sure what kind of idol she is, aside from "American." Perhaps she just has democratic tastes; she was, after all, democratically elected. But if this tour is her chance to define herself, tonight she takes a pass.

Looking classic-rock in black hip-huggers and a sheer Aerosmith T-shirt, and sounding cheerfully scratchy like the morning after an excellent prom, she opens with a quartet of mid-tempo Disneyfunkers about what happens when girl power runs up against romance. The hysteria lasts through opener "Walk Away," but she loses the crowd swiftly; the six-piece band (plus a pair of poorly dressed backup singers) is on autopilot, and Clarkson's voice isn't just tired but toast. This bodes poorly for the following portion, five chanteuse numbers ending with Annie Lennox's "Why," sung pitchy. At the center is her next single "Because of You," which she explains is about not becoming your parents; perhaps this is her promise not to turn out like Pink and Bryan Adams. Although worse things could happen.

But they don't. Instead Clarkson climbs onto the loud-

est branch of the family tree and claims the best of her birthright, the one where the cradle rocks. Realizing that hitting the notes is a lost cause, she howls through "You Thought Wrong" and a strutter she wrote for her next album, "Come Here," then a raucous "Behind These Hazel Eyes," for which she dons her video costume.

It's a mildly shredded ivory gown, and this more than any song conveys her mixed message: Her adolescent romantic gestures damaged by adult distress, she's ready for first love but already torn. Hilary Duff's gown wouldn't be ripped; Madonna's wouldn't be serious. Clarkson just gets it off ASAP and closes the show in street clothes, screaming fabulously through "Since U Been Gone" and then taking it home with a rapturous "Breakaway," during which she waves like a prom queen and the girls sing back not to her but to each other. It's as if they don't care whether she's going to find a direction; they only need her so they can be together, can form their own temporary, towheaded America, and they elected her for this very purpose. **JANE DARK**



The groupie pool at Folsom Prison left much to be desired.

COLD, HARD CASH

In 50 years of making music, Johnny Cash defied categorization. The director of a new film about the Man in Black wants his movie to do the same **BY CLARK COLLIS**

WALK THE LINE

DIRECTED BY James Mangold

STARRING Joaquin Phoenix, Reese Witherspoon, Ginnifer Goodwin, Robert Patrick

"PEOPLE ARE GOING to call this 'the Johnny Cash movie,' and I can't help that," grumbles James Mangold, director of the new, um, Johnny Cash movie, *Walk the Line*. "People will say this is the Johnny Cash biopic. But I don't divide movies by genre like that. I think of *Batman Begins* as a biopic. Why not? Because it didn't really happen?"

Well ... yeah, if you want to be technical about it. But it's easy to understand why Mangold, the genre-hopping auteur responsible for *Cop Land*, *Identity* and *Girl, Interrupted* is wary of the "b" word, which, as the director says, suggests less a fun time at the movies than a grueling history lesson replete with expository dialogue and hideous old-age makeup. Indeed, with the notable exception of *Ray*, most recent

filmmakers tackling real-life musical subjects seem to have determinedly avoided the trap-pings of conventional biopics—Gus Van Sant's recent Kurt Cobain-inspired *Last Days* was decidedly abstract, while Todd Haynes's forthcoming *I'm Not There: Suppositions on a Film Concerning Dylan* will feature no fewer than seven different actors

portraying Mr. Zimmerman, including the Irish Colin Farrell and the female Cate Blanchett.

Although *Walk the Line*, which stars Joaquin Phoenix as Cash, is a far more traditional venture than either of those two projects, it avoids the clunky melodrama of a broad-stroke life story to focus instead on the '50s-'60s courtship between Cash and

soulmate-to-be June Carter, played by Reese Witherspoon. Since said courtship had to overcome their respective marriages as well as Cash's raging drug addiction, the result often comes across like *Romeo and Juliet*, but with more amphetamines.

"Yeah—and better music," says the 40-year-old Mangold, a self-described "obsessive musicologist" who first met Johnny and June in 1999 to discuss the project, although both of them passed away before getting a chance to visit the set. "I felt like most people under 30 knew John as an old singer, as the gravel-voiced patriarch of the *American Recordings* albums," Mangold explains, referring to the series of Rick Rubin-produced records that introduced the country legend to a new generation as a proto-punk godfather. "I didn't want to make a movie about that guy, though. I loved that guy, but in order to make the film more immediate, you need to have the love story."

JOHNNY BE GOOD

LINE DIRECTOR **JAMES MANGOLD** NAMES HIS FAVORITE CASH CLASSICS

RING OF FIRE (1963)

June wrote it, and just think about this: She writes about a guy she loves who's in an absolute tailspin death spiral of drugs—then the guy makes it a huge hit!

GET RHYTHM (1956)

The songs that grab me more are John's first ones. I love this—it has a really prominent place in the movie. It's like a rap song.

I STILL MISS SOMEONE (1958)

"I go out on a party and look for a little fun/But I find a darkened corner 'cause I still miss someone." In an instant, I'm haunted. John was always a storyteller.



The man in ... something light.

Mangold was also clearly not much concerned about whether his cast physically resembled the people they were playing. "Casting Joaquin was a gut feeling," Mangold confesses. "I just felt he had the same sort of restlessness John had."

In fact, Phoenix's un-Cash-like visage actually aids the director in his task of presenting not *Johnny Cash: The Man in Black* but *Johnny Cash: The Man Still Struggling With His Talent and Haunted by the Death of a Beloved Older Brother*. At times, Phoenix even seems to be channeling James Dean, a favorite of Cash, who told Mangold he fell in love with his first wife, Vivian, because she resembled one of Dean's girlfriends. Meanwhile, Witherspoon, in an Oscar-bait performance, is perfectly nuanced as a woman who realizes, to her horror, that she has fallen in love with a philandering junkie. The fact that Carter is country music royalty looking to emerge from her family's formidable shadow is refreshingly beside the point.

Phoenix and Witherspoon also perform their characters' tunes with aplomb, as Mangold surely knew they would do, the director having, *Blender* assumes, made sure the pair's vocals were up to the task before casting them.

"Actually, I had no idea whether they could sing," says the director. "I just believed it was going to happen."

Didn't any studio exec, you know, inquire as to this tiny detail? "Yeah," laughs Mangold. "And when they asked, I would say, 'Sure, they sound great!'"

But perhaps more important than the central pair's singing ability is the fact that they are more than believable enough as lovers, albeit frequently thwarted ones, to have even the flinty-of-heart wiping away tears by the end. Certainly, the end product justifies Mangold's decision to concentrate on this particular slice of life rather than the cradle-to-grave.

"We could have chucked in all the historical landmark events," says the director. "But who gives a shit? This is the story of a man in search of his angel."

BLENDER APPROVED

The best movies of the past months



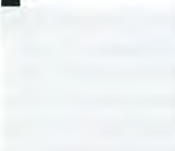
KISS KISS, BANG BANG

Kilmer and Downey eat the scenery in hilarious meta-noir.



GRIZZLY MAN

Bears eat a crazy environmentalist in hilarious Werner Herzog documentary.



LAST GOOD MOVIE YOU SAW?



BEN HARPER SINGER

"Crash has all the elements great movies are made of. It will have you processing for weeks."

THE EXCITED-O-METER

THIS MONTH'S NEW RELEASES, RANKED ACCORDING TO OUR HIGHLY SCIENTIFIC METHOD OF GUESSING

VERY EXCITED

JARHEAD

Based on marine sniper Anthony Swofford's book, this Jake Gyllenhaal flick could be a *Full Metal Jacket* for the Desert Storm generation—though it will have to go some way to improve on David O. Russell's *Three Kings*.

ELIZABETHTOWN

A sword-free Orlando Bloom meets his Southern relations and romances Kirsten Dunst in the new one from Cameron Crowe. Expect wistful homilies, Tom Petty tunes and a cameo from *My Morning Jacket*.

THREE ... EXTREMES

A trio of Asian filmmakers—including *OldBoy*'s Park Chan-Wook—offer a portmanteau movie about incinerated contortionists, dancing psychopaths and human-fetus-filled dumplings. Let's see Tinseltown remake that.

SHOPGIRL

Glove salesgirl Claire Danes must choose between feckless musician Jason Schwartzman and rich divorcee Steve Martin in this adaptation of Martin's novella. Our vote's with Martin—we hear he's kind of a wild and crazy guy.

EXCITED-ISH

THE FOG

While original *Assault on Precinct 13* director John Carpenter can barely get arrested, studios cannibalize his films. This revamp of his 1980 ghost-pirates yarn boasts Selma Blair, Tom Welling and, we're guessing, poor weather.

THE LEGEND OF ZORRO

Seven years after the original, Antonio Banderas and Catherine Zeta-Jones return to buckle more swash. The problem? We preferred Banderas spoofing the Z-man in *Shrek 2* than actually playing him.

DOOM

The geek in us is a little excited about this Rock-headlining, beastie-slaughtering videogame adaptation. But we would have been a lot more amped had it come out 10 years ago—or if the trailer didn't make it look like *Resident Evil*.

NOT SO MUCH

SAW 2

Despite its extreme gruesomeness—and huge box office—the original movie in this serial-killer franchise was kind of a dud. And adding Donnie Wahlberg to the cast is not going to have *Blender* pushing to the front of the line.





Who says bowlers aren't athletes?

THE DUDE ABIDES

This extra-potent new version of the Coen brothers' box-office dud turned cult classic will really tie your DVD collection together **BY CLARK COLLIS**

THE BIG LEBOWSKI COLLECTOR'S EDITION

UNIVERSAL

★★★★★

ALTHOUGH THIS RE-RELEASE of the Coen brothers' 1998 bizarro-noir features a number of new extras, Universal may have been tempted just to slap a "Collector's Edition" sticker on the hugely successful DVD it released a couple of years back. After all, if *The Big Lebowski's* core constituency of stoners couldn't get it together to see the film in the theaters, are they really going to pony up again to watch a satirical introduction by bogus film critic "Mortimer

Young" or a gallery of photographs by Jeff Bridges, who plays the movie's White Russian-guzzling hero, the Dude?

Actually, yes. Over the past few years, this shaggy dog story of a urinated-on rug, a missing wife and a severed toe has developed a fervent cult fan base, ensuring high attendance at a global series of White Russian (or, in the film's parlance, "Caucasian")-fueled Lebowski Fests. As tightly written as the Raymond Chandler novels that inspired it, *Lebowski's* misadventures are both unpredictable and entertainingly nuts, with the loss of Bridges's beloved, pee-ridden carpet ("It really tied the room together") leading him to buzz-harshing encounters with

nihilists, pornographers and Saddam Hussein. In addition, the movie provides generous space for the comic chops of Coen regulars Steve Buscemi, John Goodman and, as one of Hollywood's few hilarious pedophiles, John Turturro. But it's Bridges who makes *Lebowski* one for the ages as he effortlessly inhabits the distended gut and dish-eveled surfer duds—largely his own (see below)—of cinema's greatest stoner-prophet.

Also available in an "Achievers Edition" gift set, complete with bowling towel, the movie itself stands as one of the very finest ventures that Bridges, the Coens and yes, even renowned thespian Tara Reid are ever likely to be involved in.

"I STILL HAVE MY JELLY SANDALS!"

BLENDER CATCHES UP WITH THE DUDE HIMSELF, **JEFF BRIDGES**



HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR THE PART OF AN UNEMPLOYED STONER?

I didn't think about it much. People think there was a lot of improvisation, but every "fuck you," every "man," every ellipsis, was all on the page. My constant question to the Coens was, "Did he burn one on the way?"

ARE YOU MUCH OF A BOWLER?

Not really. Goodman and I practiced, but we never actually bowl in the movie.

WOULD IT BE FAIR TO SAY THAT YOU'RE QUITE "DUDE-ISH" YOURSELF?

That ... would be fair to say. I think the evidence is that most of the clothes in the film are mine. I bet I have a bunch of them. I know I still have my jelly sandals. Which I wore to Lebowski Fest!

WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

I had a great time. I got some friends together, played some music and partied with all the Lebowski-ites, or whatever they call them. I guess it was like a *Star Trek* convention, but with more vodka.

DO YOU ACTUALLY DRINK WHITE RUSSIANS?

I like the Russian part, but I'm not too fond of the white part. I drink vodka on the rocks.

THERE ARE RUMORS OF A BIG LEBOWSKI SEQUEL ...
I haven't heard those. But I'd play the role again in a minute.

WHAT IS THE DUDE DOING RIGHT NOW?

Burning his morning log.
CLARK COLLIS

LAST DAYS

HBO

★★★

Don't get too excited about publicity pictures of *Last Days* star Michael Pitt looking eerily like Kurt Cobain. Gus Van Sant's elegiac tribute to the Nirvana frontman is more painterly tone poem than detailed—or accurate—examination of the hours preceding his suicide. But the result, if frankly often dull, is cumulatively affecting as the mumbling Pitt shambles around a manor house trying on dresses, hiding from visitors and generally looking like a man at desperate odds with the surreal world his fame has created.

BATMAN BEGINS

WARNER BROS.

★★★★

Yes, this was the movie in which Katie Holmes proved incapable of acting her way out of a paper bag—or even, we're betting, of being able to convincingly say "paper bag." But everything else about Christopher Nolan's franchise-reinventing film is just great, from Christian Bale's muscular portrayal of the Caped Crusader to Cillian Murphy's freakish Scarecrow. So great is *Batman Begins* that you barely notice the almost complete repopulation of Gotham by Brits (Bale, Tom Wilkinson, Gary Oldman, Michael Caine) and Irishmen (Murphy, Liam Neeson). Also: best Batmobile ever.

UNLEASHED

UNIVERSAL

★★★★

Loan shark Bob Hoskins has raised Jet Li as a dog virtually from birth. Does this mean that, when people fail to pay their debts, the martial arts star rolls over to have his tummy tickled or urinates on fire hydrants? No, it means he beats the crap out of them. Fortunately for fans of top-notch chop-socky mayhem, a goodly portion of Hoskins's associates are delinquent in their payments, although Li is surprisingly excellent in the non-bone-crunching scenes, helped by the fact that he's not called upon to talk much.

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT: THE COMPLETE SECOND SEASON

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★★★★

Regular viewers of the tragically underviewed Fox series will need no encouragement to buy this second tranche of episodes detailing the gleefully pathetic adventures of



The Click Five:
America's
best-dressed
men's-room
attendants.

MOVING PICTURES

THE CLICK FIVE REVEAL WHICH DVDS ARE HELPING ALLEVIATE TOUR-BUS TEDIUM

"The disc with the most scratches from overuse has to be *KISS: EXPOSED*—it's great if you're looking to get pumped about making it in the music world. Plus, when you invite your friends onto the bus, this is what you want them to see playing at all times. The Who's *THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT* gets us ready to do press interviews and TV appearances. Watch it and you'll know what we mean."

businessman Michael Bluth (Jason Bateman) and his family of ingrates, criminals and/or sexually dysfunctional weirdos. To the remaining 99.999% of the population, *Blender* can only say this: David Cross as a singing, Mrs. Doubtfire-like nanny.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK: THE MASTERPIECE COLLECTION

UNIVERSAL

★★★★★

If director Alfred Hitchcock is not used as the gold standard for

thrillers anymore, it's only because Hollywood doesn't make enough thrillers to require such a comparison. All the more reason to get this box set, which boasts 14 of the maestro's films, including *Rear Window*, *The Birds* and *Psycho*, the shower-curtain industry's least favorite film ever. True, *The Masterpiece Collection* makes a few dodgy decisions—the disastrous *Frenzy* is included in place of *North by Northwest*—but to compensate, there is a raft of extras with every movie, plus a bonus disc of, uh, extra extras.

LAND OF THE DEAD

UNIVERSAL

★★★

The undead may be old-school lurchers in director George A. Romero's return to the zombie genre he created, but in an interesting twist, they are also beginning to learn stuff. Sadly, for Romero's band of city-dwelling apocalyptic survivors—Asia Argento, John Leguizamo, Simon Baker—that stuff involves the use of automatic weaponry rather than, say, good penmanship. And in an utterly unexpected piece of casting, the chief villain—at least the chief breathing one—is played by Dennis Hopper.

THE AMITYVILLE HORROR

MGM/UA

★★★

Something scary lives in Amityville, New York. However, it's not any of the paranormal ghouls to be found in this remake of the not-all-that-good-in-the-first-place '70s horror movie, but rather star Ryan Reynolds's absurdly buff—and constantly displayed—six-pack. Elsewhere, the great Philip Baker Hall proves yet again that greatness is no defense against winding up in a pile of crap.

BLENDER APPROVED

THE BEST DVDS FROM THE PAST MONTHS



NO DIRECTION HOME: BOB DYLAN

PARAMOUNT PICTURES

In this Scorsese doc, Bob Dylan reveals all! Well, some, anyway.



KUNG FU HUSTLE

SONY PICTURES HOME ENTERTAINMENT

If you see only one kung fu movie about ice cream, goofy landladies and giant angry frogs this year ...

MUSIC DVDS



Frank Black loses his train of thought after a fan throws a turkey leg onstage.

GOUGE AWAY

Cash-in from a lucrative tour? Maybe, but the Pixies' new DVD is also the definitive live document from a storied career BY STEVE KANDELL

PIXIES: PIXIES SELL OUT

RHINO HOME VIDEO

★★★★★

The Pixies may be many things—widely influential, loud—but tele-genic isn't one. They were no one's idea of pinups before their acrimonious 1993 split, and the interceding years have ravaged waistlines and hairlines with equal menace. Sure, Frank Black looks like a T. rex when he plays "Bone Machine" and Kim Deal seems more PTA chairwoman than indie-rock goddess, but given that the mere idea of a reunion was hard to fathom just last year and that the only other commercially available live Pixies show

is the 1988 concert footage included on last year's *Gouge* documentary DVD, this is a triumph of capitalism over cynicism.

Featuring the full set from a July 2004 show in Belfort, France—bonus features include performances from other stops, including the rapturous reception at last year's Coachella—the Pixies tear through their greatest non-hits with a ferocity and even a warmth no one could have predicted. Even arena-rock trappings such as crowd singalongs to "Hey" or Joey Santiago's point-less feedback solo don't seem out of place for a band so visibly enjoying their victory lap.

THE BEST OF THE REST

VARIOUS ARTISTS: MUS- TIQUE BLUES FESTIVAL 2005 (BCF)

★★★★★★★

Transport yourself to Mustique, where Mick Jagger struts at an all-night party, and *Blender*'s own (incredibly handsome) founder, Felix Dennis, belts out raucous blues covers. It's like a day in our office, in DVD form! ... **PATSY CLINE: SWEET DREAMS STILL: THE ANTHOLOGY** (MPI MEDIA) ★★ Rare television appearances (including

her last) show the original country diva singing her lovelorn weepers. Unfortunately, the interstitial doc footage is neither enlightening nor entertaining ... **THE FLAMING LIPS: VOID** (WARNER BROS.) ★★★★★ Nineteen of the Lips' entertainingly freakish clips in which, due to the DVD's reverse chronology, increasingly gaunt drummer Steve Drozd appears to be acquiring his heroin addiction rather than recovering from it ...

VARIOUS ARTISTS: THE CONCERT FOR BANGLADESH (RHINO)

★★★★

Long before charity events like Live Aid, Farm Aid and Live 8, there was this benefit for war-torn Bangladesh. Organized by George Harrison and his all-star band of socially conscious friends (Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Ringo Starr), this fully restored concert holds up after 30 years, for its performances as much as its politics. LAUREN HARRIS

Bulletproof vests:
fashion-forward
and functional!



THE MASSACRE

This time, 50 Cent leaves the gunplay and mayhem to *you* BY LIBE GOAD

50 CENT: BULLETPROOF

VU GAMES, PS2, XBOX

★★★★

PLENTY OF RAPPERS are *into* videogames, but 50 Cent is literally *in* videogames. Following a rumored cameo in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, the thug-king of all media unleashes his own third-person action game, which could be interpreted as a horrifying glimpse into what Curtis Jackson's life might have been like had he never traded in his triple-beam balance for a mic.

Turns out he and his G-Unit crew would be seeking revenge against the major New York underground crime syndicate. Who knew?

Joined occasionally by ass-kicking pals Dr. Dre and Eminem, 50 does out justice with many automatic weapons as well as his personalized brand of urban kung fu while cronies chip in with burgling and lock-picking skillz. Puzzle-solving and the ability to use rolling dumpsters or human beings as makeshift armor keep the mind relatively engaged, but in the end, it's the extras that keep

Bulletproof off the B-list.

Those gems include a multi-layered, more-complex-than-usual-gamer-fare story by *Sopranos* scribe Terence Winter (who also wrote the screenplay for 50's screen debut, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*), a soundtrack chock-full of hidden 50 Cent and G-Unit songs, unlockable music videos and a G-Unit Communicator that lets you customize the in-game playlist with any unlocked tracks. Congratulations, 50—you're one poetry chapbook away from conquering every form of media known to man.

GIZMO OF THE MONTH

BULLIES STEAL YOUR PSP? CONSOLE YOURSELF WITH THIS SMALLER, LESS EXPENSIVE, STILL-PRETTY-COOL SUBSTITUTE



Slightly smaller than an iPod and way better for playing videogames on, the \$100

GAME BOY MICRO—think Game Boy Advance, but on the Lohan Diet—can run more than 700 attention-span-decimating games on a clear two-inch screen. Thanks to the sleek black or silver exterior, it doesn't even look like something you jacked from your kid sister. Even if it is. Nintendo, \$99.99



Soul Caliber III



SSX on Tour

SOUL CALIBER III

NAMCO, PS2

★★★★

The arcade fighting classic returns, pitting a crew of sideshow freaks against one another. Humiliate friends and family by pulling off outrageous combo attacks or take it solo, *mano a ... computer*. The create-a-fighter mode adds new dimension to the game, but the fact that you can send, say, a doppel-ganger of your ex-girlfriend into battle still can't match the simple joys of delivering a well-executed dropkick to the (pixilated) head.

SSX ON TOUR

EA SPORTS BIG, PS2, XB, GC, PSP

★★★★

Oddball characters, risk of grave injury, plenty of fresh powder—no, it's not a weekend at Nicole Richie's house, it's the latest installment in the venerable snowboarding franchise. This time around, the usual cartoony SSX kids can be modified to your liking, while all those tricks, medals and points add up on "The Tour," the game's virtual career mode circuit. Despite the new features, SSX has always been about the monster stunts and near-perfect controls, and those stay as pure as the driven snow.

JAMES BOND 007: FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

ELECTRONIC ARTS, PS2, XBOX, GC

★★★

Sean Connery lends his brogue and his mug to this high-tech reimagining of the schmaltzy 1963 classic. Armed with an arsenal of guns and gizmos, our swanky spy downs dirty Commies (and martinis) with stealth and brute force. Expansive maps provide open-ended gameplay, as



James Bond 007



Star Wars



Quake IV



Virtua Tennis

does the ability to upgrade weapons and commandeer a jet pack, the Q copter and a sultry Russian double agent. Cheesy double entendres thankfully omitted.

QUAKE IV

ACTIVISION, PC

★★★★

The action seamlessly picks up where classic first-person shooter *Quake II* left off, dropping your crew of space marines onto the home-world of the unfriendly Strogg. Fight solo or with your squad to take down the alien army before the Earth turns into a toasty cinder floating in space. New online mayhem pits up to 16 mouse jockeys against each other in team deathmatch, capture the flag and other virtual bloodsports.

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

LUCASARTS, PS2, XBOX, PC, PSP

★★★

Inspired by both the three beloved original movies and the three new

less-beloved ones, this revamped sci-fi war game boasts a large-scale online multiplayer battle. This time out, the killing fields include Yoda's favorite swampy hideaway and Chewie's home planet. With more maps, more characters and new ways to blow stuff up in space, no one will be able to resist the power of the dork side.

VIRTUA TENNIS WORLD TOUR

SEGA, PSP

★★★★

Crusty ol' tennis gets a slick makeover as it enters the handheld-gaming circuit, serving up an easily accessible game backed by a fist-pumping rock & roll soundtrack. Six modes offer an endless array of options, including the ability to play solo or wirelessly with other gamers. Real-life hotties like Maria Sharapova are on board, or you can use the cool custom create-a-player feature to churn out panty-flashing clones to conquer the world, one clay court at a time.

BLENDER APPROVED

THE BEST GAMES FROM THE PAST MONTHS



BATTLEFIELD 2

EA GAMES, PC

Massive multiplayer online game, blissfully free of elves, trolls and the troglodytes who love them.



GEIST

NINTENDO, GC

Possess everything from people to dog bowls to get into the spirit of this ghostly game.



Simple Plan's Lefebvre. Not pictured: women.

GEEH FILES

AFTER THE COKE AND WHORES, VIDEOGAMES ARE MUST-HAVES FOR ANY SELF-RESPECTING MUSICIAN. THIS MONTH, **SEBASTIEN LEFEBVRE**, GUITARIST FOR MONTREAL POP-PUNKERS SIMPLE PLAN, EXPOSES HIS DWEBBY SIDE.

LAST GOOD GAME PLAYED

Need for Speed Underground, for the PSP. We were overseas on tour and I was super jet-lagged, but when I was talking to my girlfriend on the phone, I was still playing this.

BAND'S GEEKINESS SCALE, FROM 1 TO 10

The band as a whole is a six, but I'm a 10, easily.

GAMING DRUG OF CHOICE

Just Red Bull. You can play all night on that.

FAVORITE GAME FOR THE TOUR BUS

Anything that lasts a long time—*Final Fantasy* role-playing games take 40 to 60 hours to finish. I'm not a D&D nerd, I never took it that far. I kept it to myself in my basement.

FAVORITE OLD-SCHOOL GAME

The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past—I bought that one in French!

A SIMPLE PLAN GAME WOULD BE LIKE

It would be *Grand Theft Auto*-style: drive to soundcheck, drive to a show, drive to an interview, drive to an airport. There'd be mobsters and shady music-industry types and we could call it *Crazy Simple Plan Getting to the Show Game* ... I'm really bad at naming stuff.

MOST CONSECUTIVE HOURS SPENT PLAYING

I can play for 10 hours straight, lying in bed, taking breaks only for lunch and dinner.

BEST FREE SCHWAG

A couple of years ago we got a box of PS2 games. They were all lame, but at least we could say we got a box of 10 games.



Gob: good at *Halo*, poor at band-naming.

RIVAL GAMER BAND

We were on tour with a band called Gob and we parked our buses together and connected our Xboxes with a long cable. It was two of them versus two of us playing *Halo* and they beat us pretty badly.

FONDEST GAMING DREAM

We've never been on a game soundtrack! We'd be perfect for a sports game. A hockey game would be best because we're Canadians. **GABE SORIA**



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Swankier than you deserve, Ultrasone's PROline 750 titanium-plated, velvet-lined headphones offer pristine acoustics, all while keeping your earlobes in the comfort to which they're accustomed. Send us a correctly completed crossword puzzle, and you may score these sweet ears.



PENCIL ME IN

Hey, it's *Blender's* crossword! Starring 16 down!

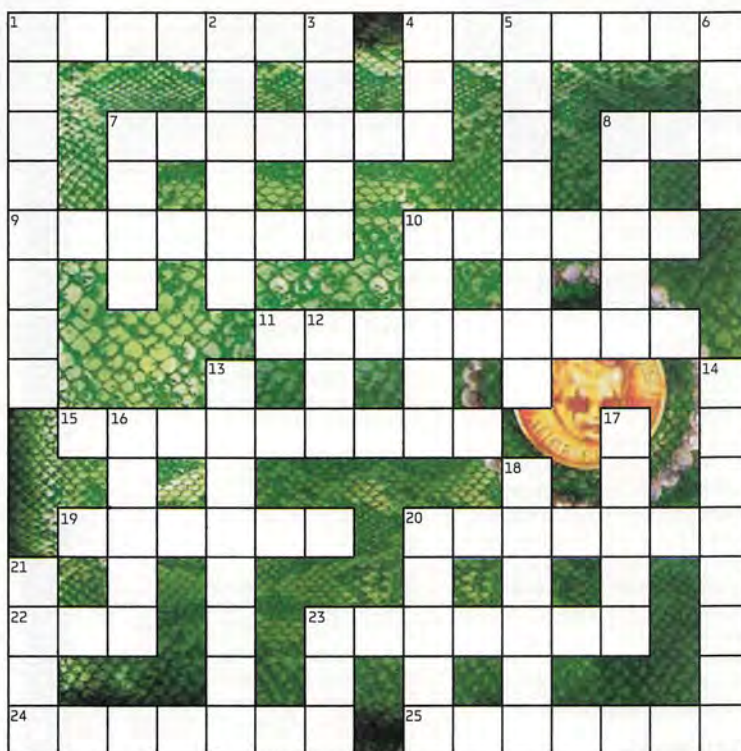
BY BRENDAN QUIGLEY

ACROSS

- 1 New new wavers who made an honest mistake
- 4 2005 Destiny's Child hit about providing? (three words)
- 7 _____ album (wherein bands cover another artist)
- 8 They're ripped for your iPod
- 9 Lollapalooza founder
- 10 He knows how sweet it is to be loved by you
- 11 L.A. trio with the hit "You and Me"
- 15 Rap-metal icons who got away with murder in '04 (two words)
- 19 One-hit wonder Toni Basil's one hit
- 20 Like ABBA, nationality-wise
- 22 U2 song in which Bono urged us to carry each other
- 23 Alternative classic by XTC about religion (two words)
- 24 2005 Pussycat Dolls hit (two words)
- 25 Singer-songwriter Sufjan who sings about states

DOWN

- 1 Grown & sexy crooner
- 2 One of the guys on the Anger Management 3 tour
- 3 "___ feel it in my kiss because I'm crazy for you" (Madonna)
- 4 Country rock's David Allen ___
- 5 Classic rap label that launched De La Soul and Queen Latifah
- 6 The Beatles went back there in '68
- 7 When tripled, a 1965 Byrds classic
- 8 Mathematically inclined birds
- 10 Fox show that got bands like Death Cab for Cutie a bigger audience
- 12 2004 Chingy tune (two words)
- 13 "My Balogna" auteur
- 14 "Secret" prog rock trio
- 16 Vincent Furnier's stage name, ___ Cooper
- 17 "___ With Me" (Pretty Ricky)
- 18 The female Black Eyed Pea
- 20 Recent hit by 15 across
- 21 Ron who's in the Stones
- 23 Hipster record label started by the LCD Soundsystem guy



→ Send your completed puzzle to *Blender* Puzzle Contest, 1040 Avenue of the Americas, 22nd floor, New York, NY 10018



ROUND 8 HIM VS. BLENDER

POP STARS aren't known as cerebral types, so *Blender* challenged the whole lot of 'em to a game of chess, hoping for an easy, ego-boosting victory. Each month, a different star will make a move, and we'll respond until someone wins or we lose interest. **BURTON**, the mono-monikered keyboardist for Finnish metal gods/chess dorks **HIM**, takes a break from ... whatever Finnish people do ... to bust a move.

HIM'S MOVE

KNIGHT TO C3

BLENDER'S MOVE

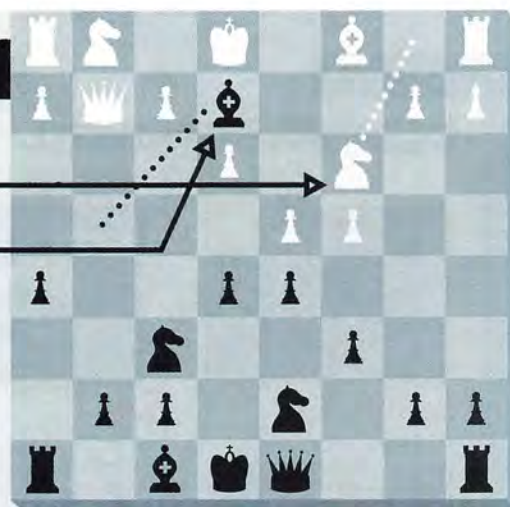
BISHOP TAKES E2

Former U.S. Chess Federation president **Don Schultz** says:

(On **HIM**) White should place more pieces on central squares and try to complicate Black's position.

(On **Blender**) Black has the better game, both in position and material advantage.

COME BACK NEXT MONTH AS THE **EGGHEAD SMACKDOWN** CONTINUES!



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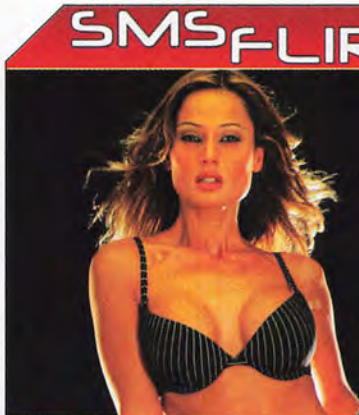


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BY ROB TANNENBAUM
PHOTOGRAPH BY KENNETH CAPPELLO

WHO DOES LIZ PHAIR THINK SHE IS?

TELL US ABOUT YOUR SELF- PORTRAIT. WHO IS PRINCESS SCRIBBLY?

Princess Scribbly actually exists. I found her online—it's like a children's drawing of a princess, with her crown all crooked and a funny little face. She doesn't look perfect like a princess should, she's a little off, but she has dignity. I've always been this unkempt little princess. That's the personality that my family and friends know.

WHAT WAS YOUR NICKNAME IN SCHOOL?

"Lizard," "Zil," "Pickle Nose." "Batty" was the biggest—some people still call me "Batty." It started from a Dentyne commercial where a guy goes "Hello, Betty!" Then it became "Batty" because of my personality. I'm prone to spaciness. There's a character in *Harry Potter* that made me uncomfortable because she reminded me of myself and she's not a flattering character. Her name's Luna Lovegood, and she's a complete outcast and nerd. She's just oblivious to whatever anyone says about her.

WHO WERE YOU IN A PREVIOUS LIFE?

I think I was in the Civil War. I can get slightly kooky about ghost stories and I have occasional psychic bouts. I think of myself as a little sensitive to energy. For instance, I can't sleep in old buildings. I just want clean energy. It's one reason I moved to California—I wanted to get to the least ghostly place on earth.

WHAT'S A "PSYCHIC BOUT"?

I had a 9/11 dream a month and a half before it happened. It was pretty fucked up. A lot of Arab women are in mourning, and then I see this plane flying in really low. I'm like, "Oh my God, it's gonna crash," and there's this giant fireball. All these people are caring for the wounded, I'm walking around dumbfounded and over to my left I see *another* plane coming in too low, and I realize it's going to crash. Here's my theory: I call it pre-dreaming. It was the kind of dream I *would* have had after watching TV all day on 9/11. When an event is super-impactful, you pre-dream it.

WHAT ARE YOU LIKE WHEN YOU'RE DRUNK?

Pretty insufferable. In my 20s, I was kicked out of bars for being arrogant. Now that I'm a mom, I never, ever get drunk. Half a glass of wine and I'm giggling.

HAVE YOU EVER VIDEOTAPED YOURSELF HAVING SEX?

We tried it with a digital camera once, and I got terrified. There's no control over where it goes. Oh sure, we're friends now, but what happens after the breakup?

THAT'S WHAT THE INTERNET IS FOR. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TASTE IN SEX?

If you were to film it, it would look normal. It's more what's going on in my mind: what we're doing, what roles we are. As into sex as I am, I like it with one person that I know well and am planning to be with for a while. Because then my fantasy life kicks in.

WHAT'S YOUR POSITION ON PORN?

I really wish they'd make pornography for women. I would like to see men and women exploited equally.

MAYBE THAT COULD BE YOUR NEW CAREER.

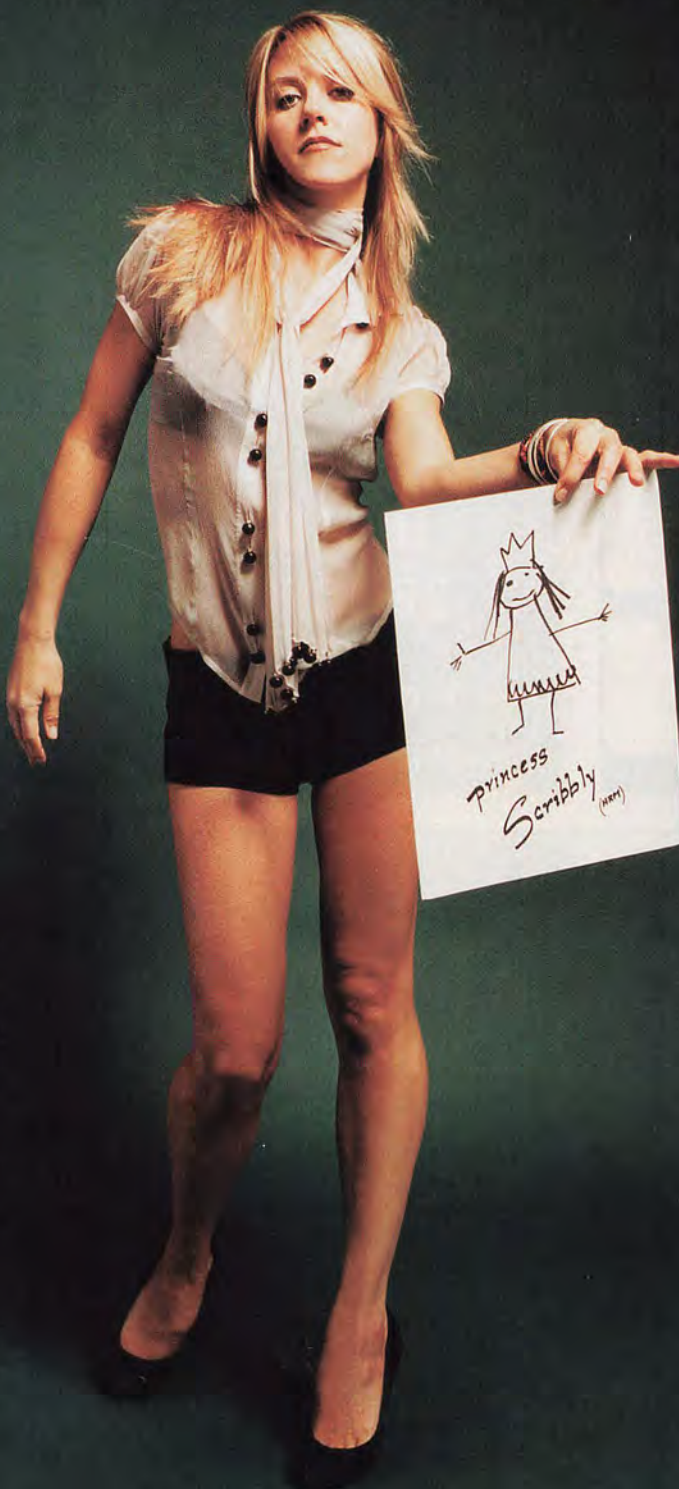
I think I can live without the infamy. I have enough already. And I don't think I'd want to see all those pussies. I don't think I'd want to powder them.

SPEAKING OF WHICH: WAX OR SHAVE?

Wax. I do it myself now. I'm tired of spreading my legs for strangers. I use Nad's—it's a bad name, but it's from Australia. It's made out of sugar. You could eat it if you wanted to.

IT'S NICE TO HAVE A DEPICATORY THAT CAN DOUBLE AS A DESSERT. WOULD YOU SAY YOU'RE A GOOD GIRL OR A BAD GIRL?

Both. I'm really honest and I try to be a great mother, so I'm a good girl. I've worked hard to overcome my natural selfish tendencies. But I will sometimes lead people on larks, try to get away with stuff and create a little adventure. I'm a bad girl in that sense. I want to be a feral thing. I want to just run wild. The bad girl gets a lot of glee when stuff's going awry. [BLENDER]



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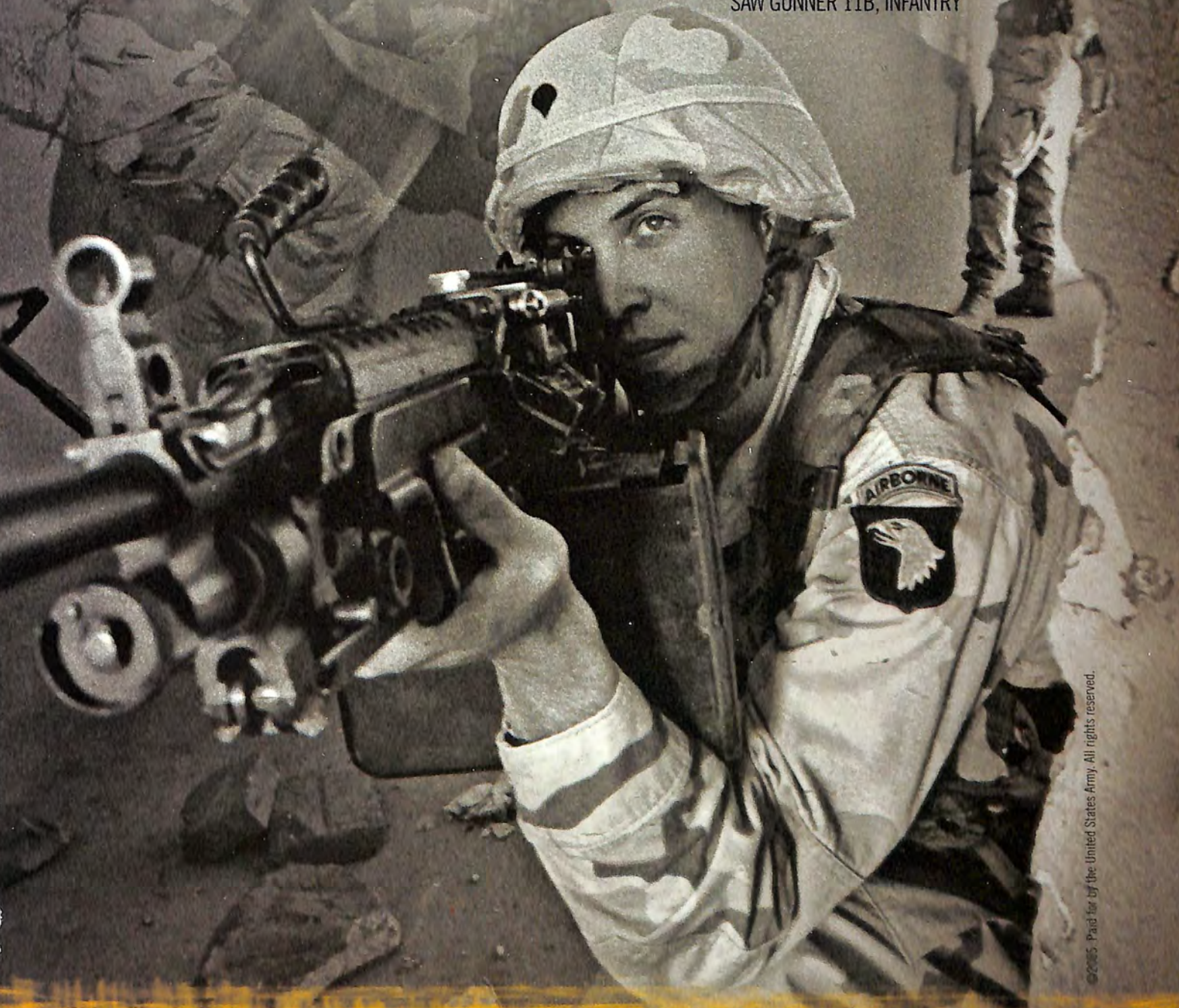
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FOR ANYTHING

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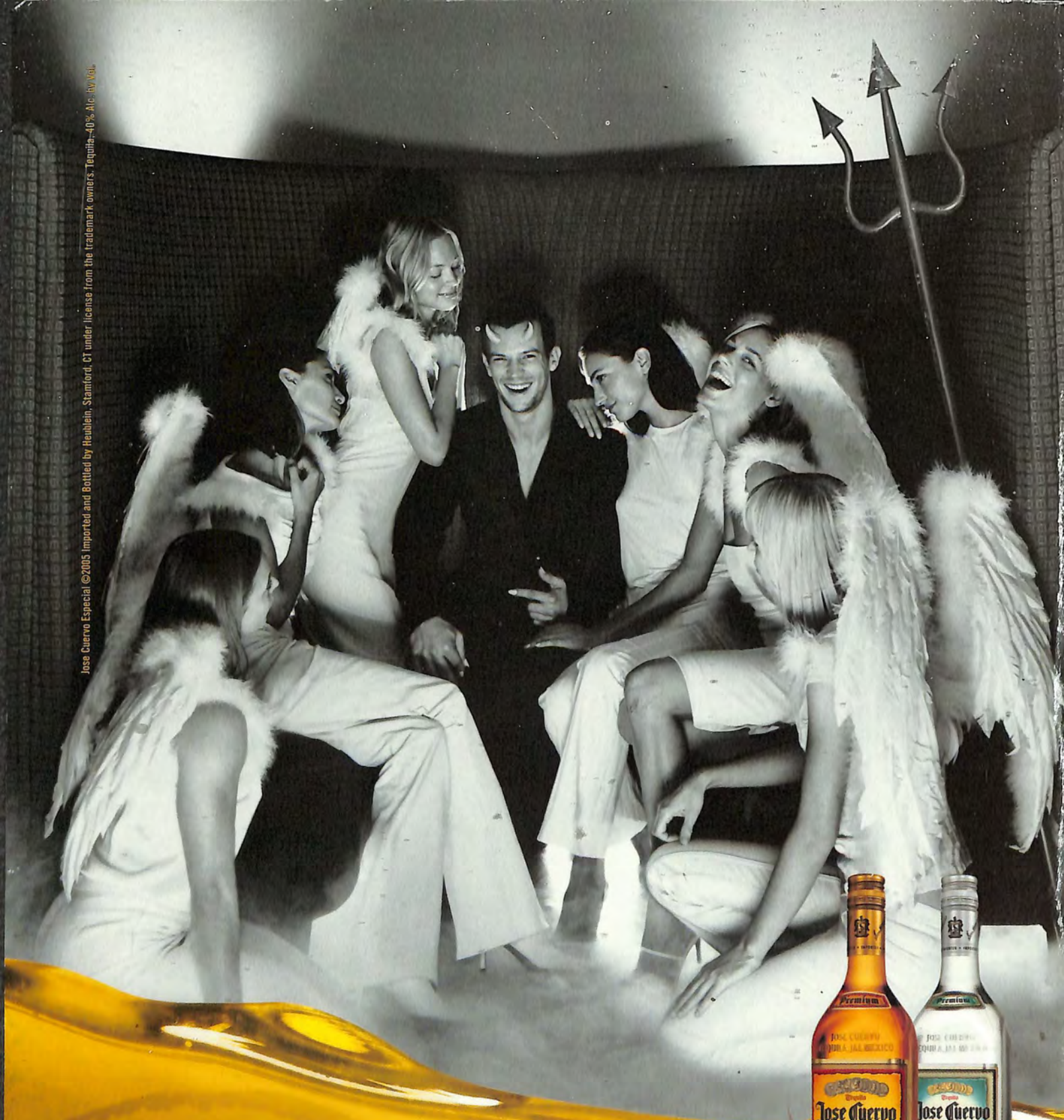
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